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MESSIAH'S SECOND ADVENT

A Study in Eschatology

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PREFACE.

I WISH especially to acknowledge my obligation to Dr. David Brown's work, entitled "The Second Advent." It is but just to myself to state, however, that I had formed the general plan of my treatment, and had published an outline of the argument, before it was my privilege to consult his masterly treatise.

C. G.

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE is to be a period during which righteousness is to prevail on the earth as never before, and called the Millennium because spoken of in Rev. 20: 4-6 as continuing for a thousand years. Our Lord is to come in person a second time to the world, in close connection with this transcendent era in the history of the Church.

These statements are accepted by the whole Christian world with but few exceptions. There is great diversity of opinion, however, as to the nature and duration of the millennial period, and Christendom is sharply divided on the question of the relation of our Lord's second coming to this grand epoch. Pre-millennialists believe that He is to come before the millennium to usher it in by the assertion of His personal power, and to reign with His people on the earth until its close. Post-millennialists hold that He is not to appear until the close of this period, when He will come in connection with the tremendous scenes of the "resurrection of the just and unjust," and to "judge quick and dead."

Pre-millennialists generally have a very profound

conviction of the importance of their special view as to the coming of the Lord, and press it with great energy and persistency. It is made a chief subject of their preaching from the pulpit and of testimony in social services. Great conferences are held, year after year, in which the best talent among them is laid under contribution to press it with might and main. Institutions are maintained in which this belief is the central feature of the teaching. A superabundant literature is being scattered everywhere—through the mails, by travelling agents, from door to door, and in other ways. In churches, however few there be who hold the pre-millennial view, they feel not only at liberty, but under obligation, to press it upon the attention of those who do not share it with them.

On the other hand, Post-millennialists do not feel called upon to give their view special emphasis in preaching or testimony. Indeed, they are tempted to give the whole subject of the second coming of our Lord less attention than it deserves, because of the over-emphasis they conceive is given it by their pre-millennial brethren; much less are there conventions and other general means for pressing the post-millennial view and combating the opposing one. Neither is there an abundant literature on this side of the subject to be scattered broadcast, even were any disposed to take the trouble. Those who wish to secure something on the post-millennial side of the question, so far from having it thrust upon them, find it difficult to obtain it when sought for. Thus Christian people are at the mercy, so to speak, of our pre-mil-

lennial friends, except as they are able, unaided, to resist the champions of the pre-millennial view by an independent study of the Word of God. The silence of Post-millennialists is really being misconstrued. It is being whispered that little is said and spoken on their side of the subject because they are conscious that they have no valid arguments in support of their view.

Under these circumstances it is little wonder that the pre-millennial view has made considerable progress. It is really surprising that a larger proportion of Christians have not accepted it. Unless, therefore, we regard the issue between the pre- and post-millennial views as of so little moment that it is a matter of practical indifference which is held, it is high time the Christian public were put in possession of a clear and candid statement of the grounds of the post-millennial belief. As I proceed I hope to make it plain that this issue is not an unimportant one; but that the pre-millennial view involves a whole system of interpretation, a distinct conception of the nature of Christ's kingdom and rule, a peculiar idea of the purpose of the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Spirit, and a number of other features which are most serious in themselves and far-reaching in their tendencies and logical outcome.

At the request of a number of brethren I have consented to write something on this subject. It is only because I am convinced the interests of truth demand some more adequate discussion of this question that I undertake the duty, as I have a growing reluctance

to antagonize the views of estimable brethren, some of whom I number among my very dear friends.

It will be impossible in the present treatise to go into minute details. I shall examine the question along the line of the plainest New Testament teaching in reference to the plainest New Testament principles, seeking to interpret the obscure by what is clear and not the reverse

C. G.

A STUDY IN ESCHATOLOGY.

CHAPTER I.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

THE first essential feature of the pre-millennial view to be examined has reference to the resurrection of the dead. Its advocates hold that the righteous dead alone are raised, and the living righteous changed, at the coming of the Lord, which they declare is at the beginning of the millennium. The wicked dead, they believe, remain in their graves until after this period and the great uprising of wickedness which follows it (Rev. 20 : 7-10). The post-millennial view, on the other hand, is that both the righteous and the wicked dead are to be raised at the coming of the Lord, which is thought to take place after the millennium. Our first question then is :

1. Do the Scriptures teach that the great period represented by the thousand years and the final uprising of wickedness of Rev. 20 : 4-11 intervenes between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked ? Or do they declare that there is but a single resurrection including both the just and the unjust ?

Let it be clearly understood that it is essential to the pre-millennial view that the former of these positions be established from the Word of God. There is no one who doubts that the resurrection of the wicked is after the millennium, at the end of all probation and of the earthly history of our race in the flesh. If the resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked constitutes a single grand event, then this general resurrection and the coming of the Lord, which is indissolubly associated with the resurrection of the righteous, according to pre-millennial as well as post-millennial views, must be after the millennium. It is only as the resurrection of these two great classes is torn asunder by the interjection of this vast period that the pre-millennial view can stand. Here is a direct issue. Let us reverently consult the Word of God upon the question.

First: How are we to understand John 5:28, 29: "Marvel not at this (His giving spiritual life to the spiritually dead, v. 25): for the hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done ill to the resurrection of judgment"?

Does this not appear to be as plain a declaration of a single and general resurrection of the dead, both righteous and wicked, as could well be given? It includes "all that are in the tombs." There is but a single "voice" or summons of the Son of God for all, both bad and good. This single summons all alike hear and all alike obey and "come forth." Up to this

point all is common for both classes. It is only the destinies which confront the two classes as they equally obey the summons and come forth, which are in contrast as tremendous as the difference between them in moral character. Language could scarcely be more specific. Can we conceive our Lord would have spoken in this explicit way of there being a single resurrection for both classes to their opposite destinies had He known that a great stretch of one thousand years, which many think to represent a year for a day, or 365,000 years, with time for the last great growth and struggle of evil added, was to intervene between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked? However it might be with an ordinary uneventful period of this duration, would not the intervention of such a period—the most stupendous in the history of the race and the climax of the ages—be too great to be ignored? Would it not have separated these resurrections so clearly and well-nigh boundlessly that He could not have represented them as a single transaction—a common “coming forth” in response to the same call? The resurrection would have been two separate and distinct events which it would have been impossible to bring together in this way and speak of as one.

It is no reply to this to refer to v. 25, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live,” where our Lord is speaking of spiritual resurrection, and to argue that the “hour” here spoken of is a long period which has

already continued for nearly two thousand years, and that, therefore, this "hour" of physical resurrection of v. 28 may be a long period likewise.

In the first place, it is anything but certain that the "hour" of v. 25 is meant to cover the whole period in which men are to receive spiritual quickening. For instance, had a man said in 1776, "The hour is coming and now is, when the United States shall be independent," the word "hour" in that connection would not have been supposed to cover all the period in which they were to remain independent, but would have had exclusive reference to its beginning. Why should the word "hour" in the identical expression, "The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God," etc., be interpreted to cover more than the beginning of the period of spiritual quickening?

But allowing that "hour" in v. 25 does refer to this whole period, this "hour" of spiritual quickening is a period throughout which this quickening continues unbroken by any time in which it does not have place. So also of the "day" of salvation; it is a period during the whole of which salvation is to be had. There is not a moment of it wherein salvation is not to be obtained. The same is true in every case in which an hour or day is used for a long period, unless John 5: 28 is an exception. That of which it is said to be the day or hour, as marking the great characteristic feature of the period covered by the word "day" or "hour," is true of every moment of the period. Can we imagine that the whole period from

the first coming of our Lord until the end would have been called the "hour" of spiritual quickening or the "day" of salvation were there to have been but a very brief—perhaps only momentary—display of quickening and saving power at its beginning and at its close, and long ages lying between when neither was to be had?

Now, what are the facts in reference to this "hour" of physical resurrection in John 5: 28, 29, according to the pre-millennial view? Is this supposed to be an unbroken period throughout which men's bodies continue to be raised from the dead, and of which, therefore, this physical resurrection is the abiding characteristic? By no means. The resurrection of the dead is not thought by Pre-millennialists any more than by us, to be a long-drawn process covering a millennium of years. All believe it to take place "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," as Paul declares in 1 Cor. 15: 51, 52. But our pre-millennial brethren hold that instantaneous resurrection is predicable of the righteous only. Succeeding this electric shock of quickening power is the long-stretching millennium—the most transcendent era in the history of God's people. Like the period from the resurrection of Christ until that of the righteous, during these centuries there are to be none raised from the dead. It is only at its close that there is to be another flash of resurrection might, as the wicked dead are called forth to receive their final doom.

Can we believe, in defiance of all scripture usage elsewhere in reference to what is said to be the chief

characteristic of periods designated by the word "day" or "hour," that our Lord had so little regard for the long-stretching and transcendent period between these lightning-like flashes of quickening power, as to ignore it altogether, and speak of the whole period as the "hour" in which those "who are in the tombs shall hear his voice," even representing the resurrection as but a single transaction in which there shall be a simultaneous coming forth of both righteous and wicked in response to the same call? Are we not forced to believe that John 5:27-29 means just what it says, and that both righteous and wicked are raised in the same resurrection?*

We must also remember that we have references to the summons to the dead in other descriptions of the resurrection. In 1 Cor. 15:51, 52 we read, "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised," etc. Also, in 1 Thess. 4:16, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first," etc.†

* Reference will be made further on to the view that there is a special resurrection of the tribulation saints.

† This passage is sometimes thoughtlessly quoted as though it declared the righteous dead were to be raised before the wicked dead. We have only to read the preceding verse and the one that follows, to see that the question was whether the living saints, at the appearing of Christ, should have precedence over the righteous dead. "No," says Paul, "the righteous dead shall rise first and then with the living saints shall be caught up," etc.

So far as we know, all are agreed that the "voice" of John 5: 28, 29 and the "shout" and the "trump" of these passages refer to the same startling summons which shall call forth the dead. In 1 Cor. 15: 52 it is called the "last trump." If there were to be a call for the righteous at the beginning of the millennium and another at the close for the wicked, we cannot understand how this in 1 Cor. 15: 52, which Pre-millennialists declare is of the righteous at the beginning of the resurrection, could be called the "last." It would be the first, unless it is to continue during all the millennial period until the wicked rise at its close, which no one believes. No: there is but a single summons. It is called the last, because it comes at the end of the world. In Corinthians, as the apostle is speaking only of believers, they alone are mentioned as responding to it. In John 5: 28, 29, where our Lord has reference to both classes, both are said to be raised in response to the same summons, which, in Corinthians, Paul calls the "last trump." Thus it is seen there is but a single and general resurrection of all, and it is at the end of all things.

So, from whatever standpoint we view this passage, it seems impossible, without the greatest violence, or even with the greatest violence, to make it square with the pre-millennial theory of two distinct resurrections, separated by an immense and grand period. If, however, there be but a single resurrection including both good and bad, this view will be acknowledged by its friends to be without foundation, and the alternative post-millennial belief in a single

resurrection at the close of the millennium will be established.

The resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked is admitted by all to be mentioned in Acts 24: 15, where Paul declares it to be the teaching of the prophets that "there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust."

This declaration seems, also, to be perfectly explicit. It is a single resurrection in which both the unjust and the just are to share. The language could not have been better chosen to make any other meaning impossible. Paul does not say there shall be resurrections of the just and unjust, neither does he say there shall be a resurrection of the just and a resurrection of the unjust, which would have left room for a separate resurrection of each class. But the words "a resurrection both of the just and unjust" leave no room for a distinct resurrection of each class, separated poles-wide apart, by the intervention of a period covering the grandest triumphs and the most terrific struggle of the Church's history. It seems simply incredible that the apostle could have used this language had he known that such was to be. If one is prepared to accept the plainest meaning of language, this passage shuts him in to a single resurrection, but one including both the righteous and the wicked, and therefore, in the most perfect accord with John 5: 28, 29.

Let us also refer to a passage in the Old Testament which has the plainest bearing upon the question before us. Daniel 12: 2 declares, "And many of them

that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

This passage refers to the resurrection of the body, for it is "of those who sleep in the dust of the earth." It is also a resurrection of both righteous and wicked: for it is to the contrasted destinies of "everlasting life" and "shame and everlasting contempt." It is a single resurrection of both these classes, for both classes together constitute the "many" who are to awake, and they are to awake at the single definite time mentioned in the prophecy.

It is also said that, allowing this to be a single resurrection of both classes, it is not a resurrection of all the dead. It is claimed that the expression, "many of them that sleep," implies that part of them that sleep are not raised.

But the expression "many" in Scripture is often used for "all." For instance: Paul in Gal. 3:27, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ," did not mean that only a part of the Galatian believers had been baptized.

In any case, supposing the resurrection to be partial, it is a simultaneous resurrection of both righteous and wicked, which is as much at variance with the pre-millennial idea as is a general resurrection of the two great classes.

Besides, the Word of God explicitly denies the resurrection of either class in sections, as the interpretation of Dan. 12:2 as referring to a part only of the righteous and of the wicked, would make neces-

sary; for, as all the dead are to rise, if there is one partial resurrection, it must be succeeded by another of the same kind of those who remain. Now Paul in 1 Cor. 15 : 23, speaking of the resurrection of Christ and His people, says, "But each in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, then they that are Christ's, at his coming." Here Paul says all who are Christ's are to rise at His coming. There is then only one resurrection of the righteous and that of all. The resurrection, then, of Dan. 12 : 2 must be of all the righteous, since it is of some of them, and it is there declared that the resurrection of the wicked is simultaneous with that of the righteous—a general resurrection of both classes.

It is also generally admitted that our Lord, in John 5 : 28, 29, borrows the language of Dan. 12 : 2. Daniel says, "Many that sleep." Our Lord says, "All that are in the tombs." If our Lord here does borrow the language of Dan. 12 : 2, He interprets the "many" of Daniel to mean "all," and we must do likewise, and the two passages are mutually confirmatory in their teachings.

Others propose to set aside the force of Dan. 12 : 2 by the translation of Tregelles, made in the interest of the pre-millennial theory : "Many from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake, these shall be unto everlasting life : but those (the rest of the sleepers) shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt."

So far as we are aware, no commentator has given this interpretation even a mention.

It is also significant that the first verse introducing this statement should correspond so closely with Rev. 20 : 7-10, which describes the time of trouble previous to the resurrection and judgment of vs. 11-15. There is a period of unexampled tribulation for the righteous in each case. When the trouble was at the greatest, in each case, the deliverance came, and the deliverance is followed by a resurrection. In each case "the book" in which the names of the saints are said to be written, is mentioned. The two passages seem to refer to the same time and the same event. So far as it is made plain that Rev. 20 : 11-15 refers to a general resurrection, therefore Dan. 12 : 2 speaks also of a resurrection of all.

We need consider at length in this connection only Rev. 20 : 11-15 : "And I saw a great white throne and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away : and there was found no place for them : And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne : and books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life : and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it : and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them : and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

Pre-millennialists and Post-millennialists agree that this passage refers to a literal, physical resurrection of the dead. The former, however, are compelled to believe it a description of the resurrection of the wicked dead alone. It is only in this way that their interpretation of the previous part of this chapter, vs. 4-7, as of a physical resurrection of the righteous, can be maintained or their general position be saved from overthrow.

But the language of the passage seems very plain. The whole description is of such surpassing grandeur that we could scarcely think it had reference to the wicked alone, especially, as in the rest of the New Testament, chief prominence and emphasis is given to the resurrection of the righteous. Notice also the expressions used: "The dead," "The dead, the great and the small." Can the words, "I saw the dead," mean the rest of the dead, after the righteous dead had been raised? Can "the dead, the great and small," mean anything less than all the dead? The inspired writer uses the expression "small and great" in four other passages, and in each passage it means all classes of those mentioned. Chap. 11: 18, "Them that fear thy name, the small and the great," and chap. 19: 5, "All ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great," include all classes of God's servants who fear Him. Chap. 13: 16, "And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond;" chap. 19: 18, "The flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great." Neither can there be any doubt in these two passages

that "small and great" includes all these specified, as well as "rich and poor," "bond and free." How can we believe, then, that in Rev. 20: 12, "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne," "great and small" refers only to one class of the dead, that of the wicked, rather than to all the dead, righteous as well, as John's usage of the expression as well as its very meaning requires? Had the writer meant to designate the dead, great and small, as the unrighteous only, would he not have said so?

Notice also other expressions: "The sea gave up *the dead* which were in it," "death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them," not the wicked dead, but "the dead" as a single great class, including all! What a strange pertinency in these expressions, if the wicked were all of the dead that remained in their graves!

But the most conclusive considerations remain. There is no dispute that all who share in the judgment here described in such grand terms have also shared in the resurrection which precedes it. If both righteous and wicked are described here as judged together, then both these classes are also declared to have been raised in the resurrection here portrayed. The answer to the question, "Are the righteous here judged?" will be the answer to the question, "Were the righteous then raised from the dead?" And can we escape the conclusion that both righteous and wicked are here judged? When "the dead, the great and the small," stood before the throne, "books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the

Those of the Pre-millennialists who do not commit themselves to the doctrine of a coming for, and a coming with, His people, believe this "day" to include 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 of the above. Post-millennialists believe this day includes the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of good and bad, the judgment of all, their reward and punishments respectively, and the last conflagration. Let us refer to all the passages in which these terms are used, and see whether there is any allusion in them to the restoration and conversion of the Jews, the personal reign of Christ over a holy people upon the earth, a great uprising of the wicked and their attack upon the saints while He is with them in personal presence and power, which all classes of Pre-millennialists believe included in that day. Almost all believe, also, that during the millennial part of this "day," the work of salvation which has made little progress prior to our Lord's coming, will then, in connection with the labors of the Jews who are to be converted at its beginning, sweep over the earth in glorious might, until all men are brought to the feet of Jesus in devoted subjection and adoring love.

But what do the Scriptures say that day contains ?

The dead are to be raised on that "last day" (John 6 : 39, 40, 44, 54 ; 11 : 24).

That day shall be the great day of searching judgment. Men shall be then judged by the word of Christ (John 12 : 48), the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 2 : 16), must give account for every idle word (Matt. 12 : 36), will have the emptiness of mere formal service exposed

rewarded according to their works—the degree of condemnation being measured according to the comparative evil of their deeds. They were judged. A general decision, which must be condemnatory or approving, was passed upon them, involving the presence of both classes before the throne. The language is in most exact harmony with a judgment of both righteous and wicked, each one according to his works, whether good or evil. How it can be made to harmonize with a judgment of the wicked only, where there is nothing but condemnation for evil works, seems hard to imagine.

So we find that the plain implication of almost every clause of this passage shuts us in to a single resurrection and judgment, including both the righteous and the wicked. Well may Mr. Hill, a pre-millennial writer, declare: "If it were lawful to consider it, as it has been in past ages considered, a description of a simultaneous and universal judgment of all that have ever lived, it would not be easy to find words more comprehensive than these, 'the dead, small and great, stand before God,'" etc.* Indeed, there is scarcely any passage on whose interpretation exegetes have been more agreed. It is significant that Dr. Gordon† admits that this passage refers to a resurrection of both classes, but assumes it to be of righteous people who die during the millennium. This view, committing those who hold it to the reign of death over a class of the righteous after the coming of the

* "Lent. Lectures," p. 294.

† "Ecce Venit," p. 273.

Lord, will, we are sure, appear to most readers to involve more serious difficulty than that from which it would relieve the pre-millennial view. In any case the evidence thus afforded, that this passage refers to a resurrection and judgment of both classes, is exceedingly strong.

We have finished our examination of the four great passages bearing most directly upon the first question at issue between Pre- and Post-millennialists—whether there is a single resurrection including both the just and the unjust, or whether there are two separate resurrections, that of the righteous before the millennium, and that of the wicked not until after this long and grand period. They all seem to declare, in language which could scarcely be more plain and explicit, for the former view. As these four are the only passages in which the resurrection of the wicked as well as of the righteous is directly referred to, their obvious agreement in the teaching of a simultaneous resurrection of the just and the unjust furnishes the very strongest argument against the pre-millennial view. We shall consider, in their place, Rev. 20 : 4-6, and one or two other passages which Pre-millennialists claim support their belief in two separate resurrections of the dead. We shall only in this place repeat what Dr. D. Brown says in view of the admission of Mr. Hill given above, but who still clung to Rev. 20 : 4-6 as proof of the soundness of the pre-millennial position: "He explains a passage about which there has been more unanimity in all ages than on

almost any other portion of Scripture by a passage on which there has been more diversity than, perhaps, almost any passage of God's Word.* How much less ought we to allow any special interpretation of this obscure passage to override the plainest meaning of the four plainest portions of Scripture bearing upon the question.

* "The Second Advent," p. 200.

CHAPTER II.

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

PRE-MILLENNIALISTS hold that the righteous, so far as they are judged, are judged as well as raised from the dead at the introduction of the millennium; but that the wicked dead are not judged until after its close. They interject, therefore, the period represented by the one thousand years and the last struggle with evil of Rev. 20: 4-10, between the judgment of the righteous and the wicked. They also separate the second coming of the Lord from the judgment of the wicked by the same lengthy period, and deny a general judgment of the just and the unjust, in the same way as they deny a general resurrection of both classes of the dead. Post-millennialists affirm that there is a single judgment of the righteous and of the wicked, and that the wicked as well as the righteous are judged at Christ's coming, and not a long period after.

It must also be borne in mind that as both Pre- and Post-millennialists agree that the judgment of both righteous and wicked takes place in immediate connection with their resurrection from the dead, the evidence as to a general resurrection and that as to a general judgment must agree, and mutually supplement and strengthen each other.

What, then, is the teaching of Scripture on the question of a general judgment of righteous and wicked?

First, let the reader turn to Matt. 25: 31-49, and read it attentively. All agree that this coming of the Son of man in His glory, accompanied by the angelic hosts, is His second personal coming. Neither is there any dispute as to the time when the judgment described takes place. It is "then," "when the Son of man shall come," etc., that the nations shall be gathered, and the separation and judgment shall occur. There is also an agreement that it is but a single judgment. "All the nations" shall be gathered before Him as He sits on "the throne of his glory" (vs. 31, 32). After they are all so gathered the separation takes place (v. 33). "Then" (v. 34), while He still remains seated upon His throne, as soon as they are separated, He addresses those on His right hand in words weighted with infinite blessing, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," and proceeds to give the grounds of His judgment (vs. 35-40). "Then," as soon as the judgment of the righteous is completed, and while He still remains seated on the throne, He proceeds to pass the terrible sentence on those upon His left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels," etc. (v. 41). If words can make anything plain, this is a single judgment in two successive acts, not two separate judgments, sundered by an immense period of supreme moment. So plain is this teaching of a

pre-millennial view makes the resurrection and judgment of the righteous and of the wicked occur in two distinct ages, the wicked being raised and judged in the age or world to come.

Does not all the plain teaching of the New Testament give the opposite impression? In this case, especially, we do not see how it is possible to force the pre-millennial interpretation of Rev. 20: 4-11 upon the rest of the New Testament without bringing these verses into such flat contradiction with the teaching of the passages which refer to the day variously designated "the last day," "the day of judgment," etc., as to endanger the inspiration of either Rev. 20: 4-11, or of all the passages with which it is brought into conflict. Will anyone venture to assume, in order to escape the difficulty, that "the day of judgment," "the day of the Lord," etc., do not refer to the same period as that covered by "the last day"? But this would require great hardihood. It would be necessary to maintain that "the day of judgment" and "the last day" were not the same period, although the same grand events are said to take place in them both. It would also require him to defy the consensus of Christian scholarship.*

Or will anyone say that the millennial age belongs to the present age as distinguished from the age to come? But this would be to give up the central doctrine of Pre-millennialism, and take the heart out

* *E.g.*, see Cremer, Thayer, Robinson, "Lex. New Test. Greek," art. day (*ἡμερα*).

how any of the non-Christian nations could in any case be fittingly addressed, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This surely means that they were saved, and as they are "non-Christian" it means that they have been saved either without the Gospel or while rejecting it, a doctrine we are sure few Pre-millennialists will care to accept. But allow that they are of the Christian nations, and are saved and worthy of this salvation, then we may well inquire, why were they not changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air with the rest of the righteous? Why do only a part of the saved who are alive at His coming receive this full equipment for the resurrection life? There is no hint in Scripture of any such distinction among the saved. The passages just referred to declare that all the living righteous shall be changed. In brief, those to whom our Lord addresses His gracious words, if they are not a class of the wicked, which is absurd, must have shared in the general change of the righteous into the resurrection body. This attempted interpretation, which is assumed with as great confidence as want of discrimination, breaks down at every point.

The other view most commonly held by Pre-millennialists is that this is a judgment of two classes of living nations, and not a judgment of individuals.

As well might it be urged, from Matt. 28: 19, "Make disciples of all the nations," that men are to be disciplined by wholesale, and not the individual men and women of all nations. "All nations" here means all

men. And how can nations have such a final and glorious or terrible sentence pronounced upon them? It is to be supposed that more and more, as the ages go by, will the righteous and the wicked mingle together among the nations. It must follow, then, that the good in nations predominantly bad, or that have treated the Jews badly, will endure the eternal curse and punishment "prepared for the devil and his angels," while the wicked in nations predominantly good, or who have favored the Jews, will enter into the eternal blessedness prepared for them forsooth from the foundation of the world. This is a revolution of our ideas of the judgment, surely. It asks us to believe that the judgment, instead of righting all wrong, will but intensify the wrong to many, and make it final and irremediable.

If this is a judgment of nations as nations and not of individuals, the representation of their having a colloquy with the judge, and of their visiting the sick, etc., seems hard to explain. Some would understand it to refer to mere temporal and national rewards and punishments; but this explanation is utterly at variance with the expressions, "Enter the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," and "Depart, ye cursed, unto the everlasting fire," etc. The judgment is final. If this is a judgment of the nations, therefore, it follows that there is to be a final judgment in which "each one shall" not "give an account of himself to God," and in which Christ shall not "render to every man according to his deeds;" but in which the destiny of many shall

be decided according to the prevailing conduct of millions, or as their government has treated the Jews, all in the flattest contradiction to Rom. 14: 12, Matt. 16: 27, etc.

Others make vague and confused conjectures.*

Dr. Gordon has no settled view of the passage.†

The generally accepted pre-millennial explanation of the ground of this judgment is scarcely less objectionable. The "brethren" of the Lord spoken of in v. 40 are regarded as the Jews, and all the living nations are to have their eternal destiny determined by the way they have treated these Jews. Reference is made to Joel 3: 11 *sq.*, in proof; but all these nations (see 3: 2-8) are the enemies of the Lord's people, and cannot represent the sheep as well as the goats of Matt. 25: 31 *sq.*, even if it has a reference to a final judgment at all. Can we believe that the action of all living nations toward the Jews is what will determine their eternal destiny when our Lord comes?

As all attempts to force this passage into harmony with the pre-millennial view involve such contradictions—may we not almost say absurdities?—we seem to be shut in to the interpretation which almost all exegetes in all ages have adopted as the one lying upon its face, that such a Pre-millennialist as Mr. Birks declares "the Church has universally applied it to the decision of the final state of mankind"‡—that

* Brookes, "Maranatha," p. 488; Blackstone, "Jesus is Coming," p. 68.

† "Ecce Venit," p. 269.

‡ "Lent. Lect. for 1843," No. vii.

it is a sublime description of the general judgment of all men at the coming of the Lord. Any obscurity associated with it is imported into its interpretation by exalting the mere setting of the grand scene into essential features; as, for instance, where "my brethren" (v. 40) is made to represent some third distinct and separate class.

Notice also the bearing of this passage on another feature of the pre-millennial theory—that the saints, raised from the dead and changed, have been caught up to meet the Lord, and accompany Him as He descends, and share with Him in this assumed judgment of the quick or living nations. Now v. 31 does not say "when the Son of man shall come in his glory" and all His risen and changed saints with Him, but "all the angels with him." Is it not significant that the very class Pre-millennialists suppose will have the chief place next to the Judge in this grand transaction are ignored altogether? Could this be, were this pre-millennial conception the true one?

But the prevalent pre-millennial interpretation of this passage as a judgment of all the living nations seems absolutely irreconcilable with other features of their view. It is declared with glowing emphasis that the Gospel is to have its grandest triumphs after our Lord comes, and that it is vain for us to hope for great progress in saving the world until after He has appeared. The Jews are to be converted, and are then to be the great missionaries through whom marvels of saving power are to be wrought. Now, if the living nations were all judged,

and both classes appointed to their eternal destiny, whence come those multitudes of unrighteous people who are to be converted through this agency after this very judgment which has consigned all the wicked to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels? Does the expression "all the nations," after all, include only a part of the nations? Or after they are all gathered, do some of them remain unjudged? Our pre-millennial friends hold that the Jews are not included in the nations; but where are the people to come from to whom they are to go when they themselves are brought to Christ? There seems no way of reconciling these contradictory features of pre-millennial interpretation and belief.

2 Thess. 1: 6-10, "If so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be marvelled at in all them that believed."

Notice first, that "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus"—His second coming—not only will those that are suffering persecution be rewarded with "rest," but the persecutors will be punished with "affliction." The apostle repeats this thought and

makes both the rewarding and the punishing general. "Eternal destruction" is to fall on "them that know not God," and "them that obey not the gospel," "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints," etc. Both classes, the unrighteous and the righteous, are said to be rewarded, when Christ comes again. But are the dead to be included in those who are here dealt with, or are they but classes of those who are to be alive at Christ's coming? They must be of the dead: for they are to include the persecuted Thessalonian believers and their persecutors, who have been nearly two thousand years in their graves. But is this judgment to be of all the dead? While in the first part of the passage Paul refers only to the persecuted saints at Thessalonica and their persecutors in the latter portion of it, he shows that these but share in a general distribution of rewards and punishments: for "them that know not God" and "them that obey not the gospel" include all the wicked, and "his saints" all His people. Neither is this judgment upon the wicked a temporary and temporal one: but is an "eternal destruction" which must be final. Neither can there be any doubt that the reward of the righteous is equally final and everlasting. As the wicked who are judged include the dead persecutors of the saints at Thessalonica, and as none believe that the unrighteous receive their final judgment in sections, but all agree that they are all judged together, this, as it includes some of the wicked dead, must include them all. This is a fair and unforced interpretation, and is concurred in by

It is while thus exalted, and from the seat which He now occupies, that these sovereign powers are to be dispensed to men. While Peter does not declare that it is only from His present mediatorial throne this will be done, the language is altogether out of harmony with the thought that but little, comparatively, of the dispensing of repentance and pardon will be done until He has left His place at God's right hand. It is in the strictest agreement with the belief that all the dispensing of His grace will be done before He leaves this seat, and when He does leave it, human probation is at an end.

In this connection, we must refer again to Heb. 10:12, 13, "But he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet."

This passage is in strictest harmony with Acts 5:31, just considered. Our Lord, after offering himself on the cross as the one sacrifice for sins, sat down at God's right hand as Prince and Saviour, to dispense repentance and forgiveness. From the time that He takes this exalted seat of power, He expects or awaits, as the word really means, until, through the progress of this work of repentance and forgiveness which continues in connection with the preaching of the Gospel, His enemies shall finally become subject to His sway. If we say that this passage refers to the crushing of His enemies by omnipotent power, rather than subduing their hearts by the power of the Gospel, we have to suppose the writer of Hebrews, in

the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned under law shall be judged by law; for not the hearers of a law are just before God, but the doers of a law shall be justified; for when Gentiles, which have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these, having no law, are a law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them: in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ."

This is to happen at "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," v. 5, "in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ." It is then "he will render to every man according to his deeds," v. 6, not to the righteous according to their good works only; but to the wicked also according to their deeds. It is not a judgment of a part of either class; for it is "upon every soul of man that doeth evil" and "every man that worketh good," and it is when God shall judge the secrets of men—all men. It is not spoken of those only who shall be alive when that time comes; for it was to include those Paul was addressing, as well as all who were to come after. Let the reader give this passage careful consideration, noting especially how the apostle includes both good and bad in one common judgment, referring back and forth from righteous to wicked and wicked to righteous; and he

will find it more than difficult to believe that in thus going back and forth from one class to the other he has two separate judgments in mind, and is each time passing back and forth across the grandest period of the Church's history without the faintest intimation of its existence.

Nor is this all. We have this same expression of Rom. 2 : 6 : "Render to every man according to his deeds"; in Matt. 16 : 27 : "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then shall he render to every man according to his deeds." Just as in Rom. 2 : 6, so here "every man" refers to all men universally and of both classes, as the connection makes evident. This judgment—this distribution of destiny according to deeds—all of it, and for both classes, is to take place "then" when the Son of man shall come, etc. Can we believe that our Lord intended the event described in this succinct statement to be rent into two perfectly distinct transactions, separated by the great millennial period? How can we venture to declare that this "then" covers all this stretch of years, and that "he shall render to every man," etc., describes more than a single transaction?

Still further, in Mark 8 : 38, a part of the same discourse as Matt. 16 : 27, we read : "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." This evidently refers to the judgment of the wicked, just as the same

expression in Matt. 10 : 32, 33 refers to the reward of the righteous. This judgment of the wicked, then, is said by our Lord to take place at His second coming. It also includes the judgment of the wicked dead, for those who were ashamed of Him, in the generation living when He was upon earth, were to share in it. If our Lord's coming, then, is to be pre-millennial, so must the judgment of the wicked dead be as well as that of the righteous. Could our Lord have thus spoken were the wicked not to be judged "when" He was to come in the glory of His Father, but ages after that glorious event? When, therefore, we read, Matt. 7 : 22, 23: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out devils, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." "In that day" refers to the day when our Lord "cometh in the glory of his Father," etc., mentioned in Matt. 16 : 27 and Mark 8 : 38, and describes scenes in the judgment of the wicked at His coming, not centuries after. So also Matt. 10:32, 33: "Every one, therefore, who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven: but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven," is to be fulfilled at the same time "when he cometh," etc. Then "every one," "whosoever," not those merely who are alive when He appears, shall be welcomed or rejected. For Mark 8: 38 specifies the time when the wicked are rejected, and here we find that the

righteous receive their welcome when the wicked are rejected—at our Lord's second coming. Thus all these passages are in beautiful harmony with each other and with Matt. 25 : 31 *sq.*, 2 Thess. 1 : 6-10, Rev. 20 : 11 *sq.*, Rom. 2 : 5-16, and unite their testimony in support of a single judgment of the righteous and the wicked, not of two distinct judgments separated by the millennial period.

Acts 17 : 31 : "Inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." "The world" can mean nothing less than all mankind. This is to be judged on "a day" appointed by God. This day, then, be it a long or a short period, must, at least, be an unbroken and continuous period of judgment, and not two periods separated by the millennium, which is the very antipodes of a time of judgment.

The same teaching is found in a number of the parables. Take the parable of the pounds (Luke 19 : 12-27), and that of the talents (Matt. 25 : 14 *sq.*). Even if we restrict these to the professed servants of Christ, the faithful and the unfaithful, the good and the wicked, they are judged at the same time, and receive their reward and condemnation together, in the course of a single, unbroken judgment. Notice also the parable of the tares (Matt. 13 : 30, 38-45). This parable refers to the continued relation between the righteous and the wicked from the introduction of evil unto the "end of the world." If anything is here plainly taught, it is that the evil and the good shall exist together until the "end of the world," and that

then, and only then, shall there be a separation as complete as it is final ; as the wicked meet their doom and the righteous receive their reward. All agree that this time when Christ is to send forth His angels—this end of the world—is at our Lord's second coming. Pre-millennialists assume that this parable describes what takes place before the millennium, and urge it in favor of another feature of their belief which will be considered later on. But how can it be held that this final and complete separation takes place then? Most Pre-millennialists hold that the greatest triumphs of salvation are to happen after our Lord comes. Now if all the tares (the wicked) are separated forever from the righteous, as declared in this parable, at a pre-millennial coming of our Lord, there are no wicked people left on the earth to be saved. If the language used by our Lord means anything, it seems to show that, at the period referred to, grace is past and judgment begun. Besides, on any pre-millennial theory, the difficulty remains that the evil and the righteous are not finally and completely separated until after the millennium: for, at its close, there is an uprising of wickedness which shows that it had never been completely eradicated. The final and complete separation does take place after the close of the thousand years. If, therefore, it is at our Lord's second coming that this final and utter separation takes place, His coming is post-millennial, in connection with a judgment of both righteous and wicked.

We have, in this chapter, sought to give the most natural interpretation of the most explicit passages

referring to the judgment of the two great classes of mankind, as in the previous one we considered the passages bearing most directly upon the resurrection. Just as in that chapter we found taught a single resurrection, including both righteous and wicked, so, in this chapter, we find a single judgment of all men at the coming of the Lord plainly and repeatedly declared. Whether this judgment be short or long, it is a single, unbroken, stupendous event. Let our pre-millennial brethren regard the judgment of the righteous as declaring their comparative rewards, according to their works and not their destiny, if they will. All the same, if this judgment, whatever it be, is but a part of the general judgment, including the wicked as well, it is fatal to their theory. The coming of the Lord and the judgment of the righteous are in connection with the judgment of the wicked, which all admit is after the millennium and at the end of the world.

CHAPTER III.

THE VIEWS COMPARED.

PRE-MILLENNIALISTS would set aside all this evidence from the most explicit passages bearing upon the questions at issue. They would rend both the resurrection and the judgment of the righteous from the resurrection and judgment of the wicked by the interjection of the millennial period, and that of the great uprising of wickedness. Before proceeding to consider the grounds upon which the teaching of all these apparently plain passages is ignored, it may be well to place the two views as to the resurrection and judgment of the righteous and the wicked side by side in general comparison. The reader will then be better able to judge of the general impression they respectively make.

The view of Post-millennialists is very simple. They believe that all the dead are raised at the coming of the Lord, and all the righteous living are changed. Then all, righteous and wicked, risen and alive, are judged and enter upon their eternal reward or doom. The resurrection takes place after all who are to die have died. The judgment takes place after all men have had their probation, and all action upon which

judgment is to be passed, is finished. Does not this seem to be the natural and appropriate time for both resurrection and judgment? Is this not the time we would expect these great events to happen, even if the Scripture teaching upon the question were less decisive?

Now let us compare with this the complicated scheme of our pre-millennial friends. I give it as outlined by Dr. J. H. Brookes, in "Maranatha," pp. 545-6; W. E. Blackstone, "Jesus is Coming," pp. 48-50; John McNeil, "Even So, Come":

"Descent of the Lord to receive His bride (1 Thess. 4: 16); Resurrection of the just (Luke 14: 14) and change of living believers (1 Cor. 15: 23, 51, 52); Translation of the saints who are caught up to meet Christ and His bride (1 Thess. 4: 17); The meeting of Christ and His bride (1 Thess. 4: 17); Period of unequalled tribulation to the world (Matt. 24: 21), during which the Church having been taken out, God begins to deal with Israel again, and will restore them to their own land (Isa. 11: 11, Acts 15: 16); The vials of God's wrath will be poured out (Rev. 6-19 chaps.); Israel accepts Christ and are brought through the fire (Zech. 13: 9); The revelation of Christ and His saints in flaming fire to execute judgment on the earth (Jude 14, 15). This is Christ's second coming to the earth (Matt. 24: 24, 29, 30); Judgment of the nations or the quick (Matt. 25: 31-46); Antichrist is destroyed (2 Thess. 2: 8); The beast and the false prophet are taken (Rev. 19: 20); God and His allies are smitten (Ezek. 38, 39 chaps.); Satan is bound (Rev. 20: 1-3);

Resurrection of the tribulation saints which completes the First Resurrection (Rev. 20 : 4-6); The millennium, Christ's glorious reign on the earth for one thousand years with His bride (Rev. 20 : 4); Satan loosed for a little season and destroyed with Gog and Magog (Rev. 20 : 7-10); The resurrection of judgment (Rev. 20 : 12-15); Judgment of the great white throne of all the remaining dead (Rev. 20 : 12-15); Death and Hell destroyed (Rev. 20 : 14); Eternity, or rather the *aions* to come (Eph. 2 : 7)."

According to this outline, it will be noticed our Lord first comes for His people. All the righteous dead are raised and all the righteous who are alive are "changed" and are caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. There they remain during the great tribulation on the earth—some say seven years from the prophetic week of Dan. 9 : 27, others think it lasts longer. Then Christ descends to the earth with His saints, and the righteous who have died during this period are raised from the dead. The millennial period follows, during which people continue to be born and die. It would seem that the righteous, for it is held that righteousness is universal, cannot be translated at conversion in childhood, or the race would not continue. They must either die, or receive their resurrection body without dying, after they have done their part in propagating the race. So there must be a resurrection at the close of the millennium for these, or a continuous process of "changing" during all this period. The wicked dead are all raised together as the final resurrection act.

Now, is not this a complicated scheme as to the resurrection of the dead? Does the general impression of Scripture teaching favor this view, or the simple post-millennial conception of that grand event given above? When the Scripture passages urged in favor of it are examined, they are found to be detached and, the most of them, of the obscure kind about whose correct interpretation there has always been doubt, while some of the less obscure do not seem to have received their most natural explanation. So evident is this that Dr. Gordon admits "we have never met this startling doctrine of two distinct resurrections, with a millennium between, till we reach the last book in the Bible,"* and, it may be added, not until near the close of this book, and that in a very obscure passage of three verses. He also adds, "There is, perhaps, no doctrine of Scripture the references to which are at once so complementary of each other as this doctrine of two resurrections," although he thinks it made out by scattered allusions in connection with Rev. 20: 4-6.

Notice also the scheme for the judgments. The first is that of the righteous, to distribute rewards according to their works. This takes place while the saints are in the air, during the great tribulation upon the earth. The second is of the nations when He comes to the earth with His saints. There must be a third, of the tribulation saints, as they have a separate resurrection after the judgment of the other dead and

* "Ecce Venit," p. 219.

those who were alive and are changed, at His coming for His people, unless they have no judgment, as do the others. Then there must be a fourth, for all the saints that are born and live during the millennium and the great uprising of wickedness, unless they also have no judgment. Finally, there is a fifth judgment, that of all the unrighteous at the end of the history of the race on earth. Now, we venture to assert, as between this complicated scheme of judgments and the simple and grand conception of a single judgment of all men at the end, which Post-millennialists hold, there are few, if any, unbiassed students who, by a reading of the Bible, would arrive at this complicated view.

But the complicated scheme of resurrection and judgment not only seems opposed to the general impression made by Scripture teaching as well as in contradiction to the plainest meaning of the passages bearing most directly upon the question, but it also gives rise to all kinds of difficulties and inconsistencies.

Some of these have already been referred to and others will be considered later. Successive resurrections, and judgments by instalments, before all who are to be raised have died and before probation is ended for all who are to be judged, are hard to reconcile with God's changelessness and the finality of His doings.

CHAPTER IV.

NO PROBATION AFTER CHRIST COMES.

THE third direct antithesis between the views of the Pre- and Post-millennialists to be brought to the testing of God's Word is the following :

Post-millennialists hold that the propagation of the race ceases at the second coming of the Lord, and that the day of probation and salvation then closes. From that glorious and dread time men will no longer continue to be born and live and die, and it will be too late to seek and find salvation. From the instant that the radiance of His appearing flashes over land and sea, the history of the race in the flesh closes, and there will be no change of moral condition or destiny ; but the eternal future of all will be fixed for weal or woe. The Church shall not thereafter receive enlargement, but complete with the fulness of the redeemed, shall enter into the everlasting joy of her Lord.

On the other hand, while a small section of Pre-millennialists believe that the wicked will be exterminated when our Lord comes, the great body of them hold that the race will continue in the flesh, and the period of probation and salvation keep right on after our Lord has come again. Nay, all but a very

small section believe it is only after His coming that the Gospel is to have its great triumphs in leading the bulk of mankind to salvation. Until then the world is to grow worse and worse, until evil culminates in the antichrist, whom Christ is to destroy at His coming. Then, through the assertion of His might in personal presence, the world, which has been growing worse and worse to its terrible and evil culmination, will be brought to His feet, and He shall reign over the earth in millennial glory. For a thousand years—some hold for three hundred and sixty-five thousand years—this glorious era is to continue, those who are born being converted in childhood. The number of the saved, instead of being complete at Christ's coming, is to enlarge during all this stretch of time, in this heyday of the Gospel, by virtually the whole tide of life which keeps flooding across the earth.

Let us bring the constituent elements of these clearly defined and opposing beliefs to the testing of God's Word.

1. Is the race to continue in the flesh after our Lord comes? Will children continue to be born and live and die, for at least a thousand years, after this grand event? Nay, as this is to be a period when peace is unbroken, and all that militates against the prosperity of men will be suppressed, it cannot but be supposed that the race will be more prolific than when under the blight and curse of sin. Is it the teaching of the Word of God that the earth will be crowded as never before with thronging myriads of

men and women in the flesh, after the second coming of the Lord?

First of all, how can this view be reconciled with 2 Peter 3 : 3-13? Observe especially v. 7: "But the heavens that are now, and the earth by the same word, have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men;" v. 10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up;" and v. 12, "Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

Now, what is the natural interpretation of this passage? In its connection is it not this? To the "mockers" who shall come "in the last days" (v. 3), and who wilfully forget the destruction by the flood and scoffingly ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (vs. 4-6), the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men (v. 7), this "day of the Lord" with its destruction—now by fire instead of water—will come as a "thief in the night" (v. 10), in like surprising suddenness. There is no warning any more than there was to the antediluvians. Now, at what time is this conflagration to occur? Paul doubtless refers to the same dread day in 2 Thess. 1 : 7, 8, and declares it to be "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power," that he, "in

flaming fire," renders "vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel." This, then, is to take place at the second coming of our Lord. Besides, it is hard to see how there could be scoffers who would say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" after our Lord had come and raised the righteous dead and translated those who were alive, and right in the face of our Lord's personal reign over the earth.

This conflagration, then, is to take place at the coming of the Lord, and before the millennium, if His coming is pre-millennial. This has not only been admitted but assumed by the great body of Pre-millennialists in the past. It is also unhesitatingly held by all to-day who believe that the Lord will destroy all the wicked at His coming, and end the life in the flesh. It can be denied by none except at the expense of the very plain meaning of the passage. But all who believe the race is to continue in the flesh during the millennium have a great difficulty to face. It is to explain how the living could survive the flames of that day, "when the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The attempts that have been made to meet it are as various as they are futile. Here are some of them. The conflagration is to be but partial, extending only to the limits of the Roman territory. The rest of the races survive and people the earth during the millennium. But surely "the earth and the works that are therein" means all the earth. The conflagration

is not to be contemporaneous over all the earth, and thus a chance will be given for some to escape. There will be a less searching conflagration at the beginning of the millennium, through which some live, and the fierce dissolving one is at its close, etc., etc.* Blackstone† places it after the judgment of the wicked, thus extending the day of the Lord beyond the last judgment. But the "mockers" Peter speaks of are to be surprised as by "a thief in the night" by the burning day. How, then, can they be surprised by this day, if it does not come until after they are judged and have passed to their final doom? Upon whom can this day come "as a thief" after the judgment?

May we not submit that all the attempts to evade this difficulty are makeshifts and pure assumptions, and have no weight against the natural interpretation of the passage? This conflagration is at the coming of the Lord, and it ends the life of the race in the flesh. If the Lord comes before the millennium, then there is no continuance of the race in the flesh during the millennium, as Scripture teaches. The idea that this grand period stretches onward from the coming of the Lord, rather than precedes it, is erroneous.

2. Does probation continue after the Lord's second coming? The Pre-millennialist answers "Yes," the Post-millennialist "No." Which view is favored by the plain teaching of the Bible?

Let us weigh the bearing upon this question of

* Brown, "The Second Advent," p. 273 sq.

† Blackstone, "Jesus is Coming," p. 137.

some passages already referred to in another connection.

"All the nations" shall be gathered before our Lord, when He "shall come in his glory" (Matt. 25: 31 *sq.*). What right has anyone to assume that "all the nations" here means but a part of them and less than all men, any more than to assume that "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28: 19) means make disciples of a part only of mankind? But "all the nations"—all men—are here declared to enter upon their final and eternal reward or punishment at our Lord's "coming in glory." Probation then ends forever.

"Them that know not God" and "them that obey not the gospel" (2 Thess. 1: 8) are evidently comprehensive expressions including all the unsaved. But these are all to "suffer punishment, even eternal destruction, when he shall come," etc. (vs. 9, 10). Probation then ends for all the unsaved.

In the parable of the tares (Matt. 13: 24-33, 38-43) at "the harvest" at "the end of the world" or age, which our pre-millennial brethren admit to be at our Lord's coming, "the tares are to be gathered in bundles to burn them," and the "wheat into the barn" (v. 30). Neither the tares nor the wheat continue to grow in the field—the race in the flesh continues no longer. Our Lord explains the tares to mean "all things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity," and they are to be "cast into the furnace of fire" (vs. 41, 42). The time of probation for "them that do iniquity" ends with their final destruction at our Lord's coming.

In 2 Thess. 2 : 3-12 there is a description of the development of an evil power apparently embodied in a person, whom the Lord Jesus shall "slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming." No one can read this whole passage and not be impressed with the conviction that Paul regarded the coming of the Lord as the dividing point between the reign of grace for sinners and their final doom.

The teaching of several other parables is to the same effect. Take that of the ten virgins (Matt. 25 : 1-13). Let this refer to whom it may, it was too late, after the bridegroom came, for preparation to enter into the marriage feast. Only those who were ready when he came had this blessed privilege. The door was shut to all others. Also the parables of the talents and the pounds (Matt. 25 : 14-30 *sq.*, Luke 19 : 12-27).

When the lord of the servants cometh, it is to reckon with them, not to allow longer time so that the past neglect and unfaithfulness may be retrieved. The faithful receive their reward and the unfaithful their punishment. The plain teaching seems to be, in all of these, that the coming of the Lord ends probation—that after He comes, no change from a lost to a saved condition takes place.

Several other lines of Scripture teaching corroborate the view that probation ends at the coming of the Lord.

The work of discipling the nations, with the ordi-

nances of the Gospel, continues only until our Lord comes.

This is taught in the great commission (Matt. 28: 18-20): "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them. . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Why does our Lord say "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"? Is He not to be with them forever? Do not our pre-millennial brethren believe He is to be with His people on earth, after "the end of the world" (which they say means of this present age), in the millennium in the more intimate and helpful bodily presence? Does this not mean that He will be with His people *in the work of making disciples* "alway" as long as this work is to continue, and that it is to continue "until the end of the world" or age, which Pre-millennialists declare to be the time of His second coming? He is said to be with them no longer *in this capacity* as their almighty helper, simply because this work is then to be completed and end? If our Lord is to continue with His people as their helper in this very work, after the end of the world or age, if then He is to manifest His power to aid His people to make disciples of the nations, as never before, could He possibly have used these words?

In 1 Cor. 11: 26 it is also said that believers are to show forth the Lord's death in the Supper "till he

come," meaning that after His coming its celebration is to cease.

The same is taught in Heb. 9: 24-28. Christ has entered "into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us" (v. 24), after having "once at the end of the ages . . . been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment: so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation" (vs. 26-28).

Having accomplished His redemption "before the face of God," then He is to come forth from His place of mediation and appear a second time to men on earth. The first time it was "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." This time it is "apart from sin" "unto salvation." Does not both the leaving of the place of mediation, as well as the expression "apart from sin . . . unto salvation" in contrast with His first coming "to put away sin," mean that the provision and purpose of the redemptive work of His first coming shall have been completely realized in reference to salvation, when He comes again?

It is also taught that the number of the saved will be complete at our Lord's coming.

1 Cor. 15: 22, 23 ought to be conclusive. "For as in Adam all die so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then they that are Christ's at his coming."

Paul is speaking of believers in this chapter. All

who have Christ as their spiritual head shall be made alive at His coming, just as through having Adam as their natural head, they all die. Just as surely as Christ is the spiritual head of all who are ever to be His through appropriating His work, so surely the "all" of v. 22 and the "all that are his" of v. 23 include all that are ever to be saved by Him. These are all to be raised "at his coming" in the grand scene Paul proceeds to describe, and compared to which the resurrection of our Lord is as the first-fruits to the completed harvest. There is no room here for the idea that only part of those who belong to Christ as head are raised at His coming, or that untold multitudes are added to their number after that decisive event. Other Scriptures might be added to establish this position; but we forbear.

Thus we find that all related lines of Scripture testimony unite in teaching that probation ends with our Lord's second coming. We make bold to say that a plain passage cannot be produced in favor of a continuance of probation after His coming. Reliance is had by our pre-millennial friends upon obscure prophetic teaching which is capable of a far different interpretation, and upon inferences from their whole system of teaching. But if there is no probation after our Lord comes, then, unless none are to be saved from the beginning of the millennium, our Lord's coming must be after and not before that period.

CHAPTER V.

REVELATION 20 : 4-6.

No rule of hermeneutics is more self-evident than that the obscure passages of Scripture should be interpreted in harmony with the plain. To wrest the plainer passages of Scripture from their most evident meaning, in order to force them into agreement with a certain interpretation of an obscure passage, while this very passage is capable of an interpretation in perfect accord with the most evident meaning of a large number of plain passages, is exegetical insanity. It is because of this principle that we have felt ourselves compelled to defer the consideration of Rev. 20 : 4-6, and certain obscure allusions upon which Pre-millennialists depend to support their general theory, until the more explicit passages had been examined. We assume, of course, that the Scriptures thus far adduced are among the plainer teachings of the Bible, and that Rev. 20 : 4-6 is one of the more obscure passages. Does this need proof? The passages we have referred to were almost all given in direct discourse, and are in unfigurative language. The speaker or writer evidently thought those addressed would understand his meaning. Apart

from any bias because of theories of the millennium, there has been scarcely any disagreement among interpreters as to their meaning. On the other hand, the whole book of Revelation, at least after the letters to the seven churches, has ever been regarded as obscure and difficult of interpretation. It is the language of figure and symbol. Not only have its interpreters been divided into great general classes, but they have disagreed upon points almost numberless, as in the case of no other book in the New Testament.

Neither is Rev. 20: 4-6 among the least obscure parts in this book. Not only are interpreters divided on the question whether it is to be understood literally or spiritually, but there is great diversity of opinion both among the literalists and those who explain its meaning figuratively. Dr. Gordon thought it included all the saints, as have the larger portion of Pre-millennialists, in the past. Blackstone, Brookes, McNeil, and a growing proportion of the Pre-millennialists of the present, regard it as confined to what they term the tribulation saints, or such as die during the great tribulation, the time between the so-called rapture of the saints and our Lord's return to the earth with them. Others believe that the most eminent of the confessors in all ages will share in this resurrection. A similar diversity of view prevails among those who interpret the passage figuratively. Probably there is no other passage about which there has been more difference of opinion. It is true that many of our pre-millennial brethren think of both

the book of Revelation, and this passage especially, as among the plain portions of Scripture; but in view of all this divergence of belief among themselves as well as others, this claim is preposterous.

If, therefore, the question be whether we shall begin with Rev. 20 : 4-6 and interpret the passages hitherto adduced in harmony with one of the many possible views as to its meaning, even by doing violence to their most evident sense, or whether we should begin with these passages and make the consensus of their unforced teaching the norm to judge as to which of the many possible interpretations of Rev. 20 : 4-6 is the correct one, the rule we referred to at the beginning of this chapter requires us to do the latter, and justifies us in the plan of treatment we have adopted.

The only question, then, is whether the plainer and more explicit passages bearing on the questions under discussion do teach a single and general resurrection, a single and general judgment, the end of the race in the flesh, and the end of probation, at the second coming of our Lord, or whether it is their teaching that there are two, if not three, distinct and separate resurrections and judgments, and that the race in the flesh and probation do continue after His coming. The reader must judge for himself whether it has been made plain that the former and not the latter is their teaching; but this is what their natural and unforced interpretation seems to me to declare with overwhelming explicitness and iteration. Believing, as I do, that Scripture is never in conflict with Scripture, when

correctly understood, the true interpretation of Rev. 20 : 4-6 must be the one which brings its teaching into accord with that of the rest of the New Testament as we have explained it. Apart altogether from its bearing on the question of the millennium, candid interpreters have explained it both as figurative and as literal. This proves it to be capable of either a figurative or a literal interpretation. As the literal interpretation would bring it into conflict with what appears the unforced meaning of whole classes of explicit passages thus far adduced, I am compelled to explain it figuratively. But, even if it were otherwise, ought we not to be willing to accept a less satisfactory explanation of this one obscure passage, rather than consent to wrest all these plain passages from their natural and evident meaning ?

Let us read Rev. 20 : 4-6 :

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them ; and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand ; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection ; over these the second death hath no power ; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

Let it not be forgotten that this is the only direct passage of Scripture urged in favor of the two resurrections, with the millennium between, and involving the belief in two separate judgments, and the continuance of the race in the flesh and of probation after our Lord comes. Dr. Gordon frankly admits this in the question : " But how is it we have never met this startling doctrine of two distinct resurrections, with a millennium between, till we reach the last book of the Bible ? " While he claims that this doctrine has been met in other parts of the Scripture, he was unable " to define it " until this passage is reached, and he adds, later on, " There is, perhaps, no doctrine of Scripture, the references to which are at once so fragmentary and so complementary of each other as this doctrine of two resurrections. " *

Dr. Brookes says : " We come now to the well-known passage which distinctly asserts the doctrine " † (of the two resurrections), tacitly conceding that this is the only Scripture which " distinctly asserts " it. This means that this doctrine could never have been drawn from the Bible without the help of this passage ; in other words, that this passage is indispensable to the theory of two resurrections with all it involves. Now, Pre-millennialists deem this doctrine of two resurrections of vast moment. Does it not seem strange that so very important a doctrine should have been left to depend for its revelation upon a single passage in almost the last chapter of the most difficult book of

* " Ecce Venit," pp. 219, 228.

† " Maranatha," p. 66.

the Bible? We should at least expect that this one brief passage, which was to serve so momentous a purpose, should be one of crystal clearness. It is safe to say that no other important doctrine of Scripture is left to depend for its revelation upon a single passage, however clear it may be. Much less might we expect the one indispensable passage itself to be so obscure that honest interpreters have differed so widely as to its meaning, and to be found in a book so full of strange and mysterious imagery. Can we believe such a passage as this was intended to be the medium of the revelation of a doctrine so important as this is deemed, and its one indispensable bulwark? Much less are we justified in making one of the possible interpretations of this passage the centre of a great system, around which the plainer teaching of the New Testament must be grouped, even if they must be wrenched away from the meaning which the vast majority of interpreters suppose they convey.

But let us examine the passage more carefully.

1. If this is the description of a bodily resurrection, it is not of a resurrection of all the righteous dead.

The words, "Them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand," are evidently intended to restrict those that "live and reign with Christ" to two classes. Could such language be used to describe all the righteous dead that have ever lived? The first class—"them that had been beheaded"—are martyrs. Who

constitute the second? "Such as worshipped not the beast," etc. This is made clear by Rev. 6 : 9-11, wherein the first class is described almost in identical terms—"them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." These are asked "to rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed, even as they were, should be fulfilled," before the Lord should "judge and avenge their blood." The second class included in Rev. 20 : 4 are those referred to in chap. 6 : 9-11 as still to be slain. This is apparent from the correspondence between the description—"such as worshipped not the beast," etc.—and the account of the persecutions which are said to burst out in connection with the beast and his image, in the chapters between Rev. 6 : 9, and Rev. 20. Notice especially chap. 13 : 15, where it is said, "It was given unto him to give breath to it, even to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed." To make Rev. 20 : 4-6 refer to all the righteous is to set at nought the plainest intention of the most definite language, as well as the evident relation of Rev. 6 : 9-11 and Rev. 20 : 4-6. As we have said, Pre-millennialists are more and more adopting this restricted interpretation as of the martyrs only. Forced by the demands of their theory of a coming of Christ for His people, and a subsequent coming with them, they would restrict its meaning too much, and make it refer exclusively to what they term the tribulation

saints, or those who endure the trials of the times between these two comings of our Lord. But while Rev. 20 : 4-6 refers to two classes exclusively, it evidently includes all these classes. While "such as worshipped not the beast" may include those only who lived immediately before the millennium, "them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God," or as in Rev. 6 : 9-11, "them that had been slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held," can only mean all that had ever been slain for this reason.

Now, if Rev. 20 : 4-6 is to be interpreted literally, it requires us to face the difficulties involved in two distinct resurrections of the righteous. It even then leaves all the hosts of saved people who may die during the millennium unprovided for, to be raised at some other time or times. Now, how does this conception square with the general teaching of the New Testament as to the resurrection of the righteous? Take a few passages :

1 Cor. 15 : 51, 52 : "Behold I tell you a mystery : We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ; for the trump shall sound, and the dead shall be raised," etc.

1 Cor. 15 : 23 : "They that are Christ's at his coming."

John 5 : 29 : "They that have done good unto the resurrection of life."

1 Thess. 4 : 14 : "Them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

1 Thess. 4. 16 : "The dead in Christ shall rise first."

These expressions, "the dead," "they that are Christ's," "they that have done good," "them that are fallen asleep in Jesus," "the dead in Christ," are all perfectly general, and they are also used in connection with accounts of the resurrection, as of a single, and, for the most part, of an instantaneous, event. It is difficult enough to attempt to rend the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked asunder, but to accept an interpretation of Rev. 20 : 4, which requires us to rend the resurrection of the righteous itself into fragments, against what seems the most explicit teaching of the rest of the Bible, appears to me most unsafe. The fact that there is not only not the remotest allusion to any such fragmentary resurrection of the righteous in the New Testament apart from the literal interpretation of Rev. 20 : 4-6, but that the general teaching of the plain passages of the New Testament is directly against this idea, forms the strongest presumption against the correctness of such literal interpretation of this passage.

2. The alternative presented is to have "part in the first resurrection" or to be under the power of the "second death"—to be cast into the lake of fire.

The implication seems to be that all who do not have part in the first resurrection here spoken of must share in the second death. Now, if this is a literal resurrection, say, of all the righteous dead, until the millennium, as Pre-millennialists have generally held, then what about those who live during the millennium? They do not share in this resurrection.

Must they be cast into the lake of fire? If this resurrection is literal and of the martyrs only, the difficulty becomes all the greater.

3. It is said, "The rest of the dead lived not, until the thousand years should be finished." The natural, if not the necessary, implication of this is that the rest of the dead should live when the thousand years should be finished. Now, what do we find at the end of the thousand years? Is it a literal resurrection of the wicked dead? Let us read: "When the thousand years are finished Satan shall be loosed out of his prison," etc. (vs. 7-10). It is a resurrection of wickedness which has been virtually dead during the millennium, and which now, under satanic impulse, dashes itself in its last expiring throes against righteousness and those who represent and embody it. If the resurrection of the martyrs here spoken of and of the "rest of the dead" referred to be of the same character, as seems evident, then, as the resurrection of the "rest of the dead" is not of the bodies of the wicked, neither can that of the martyrs be physical.

4. If this passage refers to the physical resurrection of the martyr dead, as the final act in the resurrection of all the saints and their reign with Christ on the earth, then we have to face a difficulty which to me seems almost insuperable. Pre-millennialists suppose that Christ, during the millennium, will, through His personal and visible presence on the earth, manifest transcendent power. Through this power, righteousness not only shall prevail, but wickedness shall be practically non-existent. With Him, and sharing His

rule, will be the glorified saints in their resurrection bodies, to be visible witnesses of His power which had raised them from the dead, and of the certainty that all His words of promise or threatening must come to pass. And yet, in an evangelized world, among those who must be acquainted with the very prophecy which assured the overthrow of their uprising, in presence of the glorified saints, and in the face of the omnipotent and reigning Christ, as He had ruled in personal presence and resistless power for generations and generations, wicked men arise, as it would appear, suddenly, and the strength of wickedness, in a little time, assumes such proportions that its votaries "compass the camp of the saints and the beloved city"—the city of Jerusalem, where Christ and the glorified saints have the seat of their rule—and fire must come from heaven and devour them; or, as it would appear, they would have swept the saints away and triumphed.

Now, all this is not irreconcilable with the view of the millennium which Post-millennialists hold. Righteousness prevails, not through the personal presence of Christ in irresistible power after having raised the righteous dead, but through such progress of the Gospel as we observe to-day. There will be no personal and visible presence of the omnipotent Saviour, reigning in mighty power with His glorified people in Jerusalem; but righteousness will maintain its sway, as it secured it, by the power of truth and moral influences. There will be no memories handed down of the tremendous display of majesty and might described in

Matt. 25 : 31 *sq.*; for this judgment is still to be. While righteousness will dominate the world, wickedness will still exist, but in a suppressed state. In the end, evil, which has been becoming more intense as it has maintained itself in the face of the strongest moral forces, and as it has been pent up, will burst forth in a last struggle for supremacy over the earth, and then those who are its representatives will meet their final overthrow, as the Lord comes to raise the dead and judge all that have ever lived.

But to suppose there will arise such an insurrection of the wicked in the teeth of the power which Premillennialists assume will be displayed by a Christ ruling in majesty and glory with His glorified saints—to suppose men with knowledge of the scenes enacted at His coming (described in Matt. 25 : 31), and with knowledge of the almighty power with which He has been ruling for so long, will dash themselves against His personal might, as well as that of His living and glorified saints—seems to me well-nigh incredible. In proportion to these difficulties will be the objection to the interpretation which involves them all.

5. As already remarked, Rev. 20 : 4-6 contains the answer to the prayer of the martyrs recorded in Rev. 6 : 9-11. These are represented as crying "with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ? . . . It was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which

should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled." In Rev. 20 : 4-6, the time for the fulfilment of this promise has come, through the complement of the martyrs being made up, and we see the "judgment" prayed for "given to them" (v. 4). Now, if this passage is to be interpreted literally of martyrs who have been raised from the dead, then the judgment must be upon those who dwelt upon the earth with them and shed their blood (Rev. 6 : 10). But before all who were to be slain from that time on, had been martyred, these persecutors had long since been dead, and they are not to rise till the thousand years and the last uprising of evil are over. How can judgment and vengeance be executed upon those whose time for judgment has not yet come?

6. Pre-millennialists who interpret this passage literally are compelled to connect it with the second coming of our Lord. Yet the second coming of our Lord is not hinted at in the remotest way, although the coming of the angel to bind Satan is mentioned (v. 1). Can we believe that the event which is to be the grandest in the history of the world and the consummation of the ages—that which, according to pre-millennial interpretation, gives all its significance to the whole narrative—would be left out? Had John seen our Lord descending to raise the dead in this vision, can we believe he would have left this most transcendent part of the vision unnoticed? Some, however, have sought to escape this difficulty by referring to Rev. 19 : 11 *sq.*, as a vision of our Lord's personal coming to raise the righteous dead. How-

ever, Pre-millennialists themselves are far from agreed upon this as the true interpretation of this Scripture. The imagery differs altogether from the descriptions uniformly given elsewhere of His coming: Matt. 24 : 30 : "The Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory;" Matt. 25 : 31 : "When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory;" 2 Thess. 1 : 7 : "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of his might, in flaming fire;" Matt. 26 : 64 : "Ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven." If this passage refers to His second coming, instead of raising the dead when He appears, a series of grand and terrific events (see Rev. 19 : 11-21) is to intervene between His advent and the resurrection of the righteous, to which Rev. 20 : 4-6 is supposed to refer. On the other hand, the Pre-millennialists, who see in Rev. 20 : 4-6 a resurrection of "tribulation saints" only, believe that the righteous dead generally were caught up with the living saints in "secret rapture" quite a period before this lesser resurrection. They place His second coming to awaken the righteous dead generally before the pouring out of the seven vials of the 16th of Revelation, and a long time prior, therefore, to that described in Rev. 19 : 11 sq. Finally, in Rev. 20 : 11 we have our Lord's appearing for judgment described in language almost identical with that of Matt. 25 : 31, thus making it apparent that the same judgment is spoken of in both passages. But in the latter passage, the judgment is

in immediate connection with His second advent ; and, therefore, the second coming of our Lord must be in immediate connection with Rev. 20 : 11, not prior to Rev. 20 : 4-6, and Rev. 19 : 11-21 must be a symbolic representation of some part of the history of the Church prior to His personal coming. The fire "coming down from heaven" (Rev. 20 : 9) and devouring the wicked in their last uprising is rather in connection with the Lord as He appears in flaming fire taking vengeance on His enemies (2 Thess. 1 : 8).

7. If Rev. 20 : 4 refers to the post-resurrection reigning of all the saints "with Christ," why is it said to be for one thousand years only ? To "him that overcometh" (Rev. 3 : 21), our Lord says, "I will give to sit down with me in my throne," and the promise to all the saved in Rev. 22 : 5 is that "they shall reign forever and ever." If it be said that it refers exclusively to reigning on the earth, it may be replied that the passage does not mention reigning on the earth ; it is reigning "with Christ," apparently in the most general sense in which saints reign with Him, if this refers to their reign with Him after He comes again. In any case, allowing that exclusive reference is to a reigning on earth, the implication is that the saints shall reign on the earth only for a thousand years, and the pre-millennial belief that the earth is to be the eternal home of the redeemed is set aside. But as has been shown, and as a very large proportion of Pre-millennialists now admit, Rev. 20 : 4-6 refers to the martyrs only. Are none but the martyrs to reign with Christ in the post-resurrection state ? If not

why are they alone mentioned as sharing in His rule? Questions will also arise as to the saints who are born and live during the millennium. Do they have no share in this reigning with Christ?

We thus find that the literal interpretation of this passage is very far from the plain and easy matter Pre-millennialists ever assume it to be. It is encompassed with difficulties of the most serious nature, if they are not insuperable. While we do not venture to say that the figurative interpretation is without its difficulties—the passage is too obscure to make a perfectly satisfactory explanation possible—it is hoped that it may be made to appear, apart altogether from the tremendous presumption against the literal interpretation afforded by the general teaching of the New Testament, that there is less against and more in favor of the figurative interpretation than of the literal.

1. The most of Revelation, from the beginning of chapter four to the end, is in the language of symbol and figure. Take the vision of chapter four—the elders, the lamps, the sea of glass, the beasts, are all symbolical. The book with the seven seals, the Lamb with the seven horns and eyes (chap. 5), are of the same character, and the whole scene is to represent truth of a larger significance than that which appeared to John. Equally symbolical is the opening of the seals and the horses of various colors of chapter six. And so the visions of symbolic beings and doings succeed each other to the end. The angels holding the four winds, the sealing of the servants of

God on their foreheads, the angel with the censer, the seven angels with their trumpets, the sounding of the trumpets, and what follows, are all in the language of figure. Then the woman and the dragon and the beasts which follow him, and the struggles, the vials, the woman in scarlet, Babylon, the white horse and his rider followed by the armies of heaven on white horses, the sharp sword proceeding out of his mouth, the summoning of the vultures, etc., are all figurative and symbolical. John did not see, for the most part, at least, a vision of the very things which were to come to pass, but visions of what represented them in symbol and figure. Thus we come to the immediate connection of our passage, and still, up to the very passage itself, we find the language of symbol continued. No one surely can suppose that the angel with his key and his chain, his binding Satan with the chain, his casting him into an abyss and locking him in and sealing the abyss over, is a literal representation. Even in the passage itself there is much that is undeniably symbolical. The beast and his image, and the receiving of the mark on their foreheads and in their hands, are of this character. Instead, therefore, of its being unjustifiable to interpret this passage figuratively, even if it is at all possible to explain it literally, the overwhelming presumption from the whole character of the book from the third chapter, and from the character of its immediate connection and much of the passage itself, is in favor of a figurative explanation. It is more

reasonable to interpret it figuratively, unless its language makes this explanation well-nigh impossible.

2. The second death, from which those who have part in the first resurrection are secure, is figurative. Is it not reasonable that the first resurrection in immediate connection with which it stands should also be figurative? Pre-millennialists assume that the second resurrection—that of the rest of the dead—of which that of Rev. 20: 4-6 is said to be the first, is described in Rev. 20: 11 *sq.* As the latter is admitted by all to be a physical resurrection, they argue very strongly that the first resurrection which this succeeds must be of the same kind, and likewise of the bodies of those raised. Now, if the physical resurrection of Rev. 20: 11 *sq.*, were correlated with that of Rev. 20: 4-6 as the second, of which this latter is the first, their argument against the first being a figurative resurrection would be very strong. But in assuming that the resurrection of Rev. 20: 11 *sq.*, is that of the rest of the dead spoken of in Rev. 20: 5, or the second resurrection of which that of Rev. 20: 5 is the first, they assume the very point to be proved, and attribute to Post-millennialists a view that most of them repudiate, and that is forbidden, as it seems to me, by the passage itself. It is nowhere said that Rev. 20: 11 *sq.*, describes the second resurrection, or that of the rest of the dead. What are really correlated in this passage are "the first resurrection" and "the second death." Are we not almost as fully justified in assuming that both these must be of the same character, as we should be that the resurrections of

v. 4 and v. 12 *sq.*, must so be, if they were related in the same way? It is the Pre-millennialists and not the Post-millennialists who would make the resurrection of one kind and the death of another, the former literal and the latter spiritual. So Pre-millennialists are more guilty of the inconsistency they charge upon us than are Post-millennialists, who hold that the first and second resurrections spoken of and implied in Rev. 20 : 4-6 are both figurative.

3. The "rest of the dead," it is declared, "lived not until the thousand years should be finished." Can we doubt that this means they were to live when the thousand years were ended? In v. 3 we read that the angel shut Satan in the abyss "that he should deceive the nations no more until the thousand years should be finished," an expression identical with v. 5, quoted above. Now, we know that "until the thousand years should be finished" of v. 3 did not mean that Satan was not to go forth to deceive the nations until a somewhat prolonged period after the thousand years were over; but that he was to begin his evil work as soon as they were ended (v. 7). What right have we to suppose the very same words in v. 5 mean that the rest of the dead were not to live again until the conclusion of a fateful period after the thousand years were completed? And yet this is what the literal interpretation of Rev. 20 : 4-6 requires us to believe. The rest of the dead, the unrighteous, according to this view, instead of living again at the end of the thousand years, do not rise from the dead until after the last uprising of

wickedness has run its course, after the conclusion of the millennium (vs. 7-10), and in the resurrection of v. 11 *sq.*

And yet Pre-millennialists are properly very much concerned to insist upon the implication of this word "until." For instance, Luke 21 : 24, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled," is not thought to mean that Jerusalem is to remain trodden down until long after "the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"; Rom. 11 : 25, "Hardening in part hath befallen Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," is not interpreted to mean that this hardening shall continue until a lengthened period has elapsed after "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in"; Acts 3 : 21, "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things," is not thought to imply that our Lord is not to come until long after the times of restoration have ended. And so we might continue to refer to the use of "until," but these passages should suffice.

It seems plain, then, that Rev. 20 : 5 means that the rest of the dead will live again as soon as the thousand years are finished, and not remain unquickened until after the great uprising of wickedness shall have intervened. The pre-millennial interpretation, therefore, which sees the resurrection of "the rest of the dead" in the vision of vs. 11-15, after the uprising of evil shall have been crushed, rather than when "the thousand years are finished," must be wrong, and we are shut in to another interpretation than the literal, and one which does not contradict the plainest

implication of the passage. The resurrection of "the rest of the dead" must take place at the end of the thousand years, and not after the last struggle of evil which succeeds this period.

Is there an interpretation, then, of this difficult passage, which is less obvious to the objections which lie against the literal explanation, and which will better meet the positive conditions which have been named, while, at the same time, it does not conflict with the direct and general teaching of the New Testament? We hold that there is such an interpretation, although no exegesis of the passage may be altogether satisfactory.

As already noticed, Rev. 20 : 4-6 is to be interpreted in connection with Rev. 6 : 9-11. In the earlier chapter there is a vision of the souls of a class of martyrs, under the altar, crying out for a judgment and vengeance upon their persecutors, which they are told cannot yet be executed. The vital question in the interpretation of both these related passages is whether this is a vision of the actual, or whether it is a vision of what represented the actual in a symbolic way. It must be remembered that the altar, and the martyrs, and their crying for satisfaction, are a part of John's general vision recorded in chapters 4, 5, and 6, of the throne and one sitting upon it, of the four and twenty elders, of the lamps burning before the throne, of the glassy sea, of the four living creatures full of eyes, etc. Now, no one believes this all a vision of what was actually existing and taking place in heaven. The lamps, the elders, the living

creatures are all symbolical and represent something. So also of the altar and the martyrs. Can we believe that John saw the souls of the martyrs except in vision? Can we believe that the souls of these most faithful witnesses for God are cast down at the foot of an altar, like the beasts slain in sacrifice? Can we believe this to be their condition in heaven, and that they must remain thus, consumed with unsatisfied desire, until the last witness has sealed his testimony with his blood? No, it is doubtful if any sober student of the Bible, be his view as to the millennium what it may, has ever thought this to be a vision of the actual. The altar, the souls of the martyrs, their place under or at the foot of the altar, their crying with a great voice for satisfaction upon their persecutors which would not be granted—all are to represent something in the language of symbol. What can the martyrs represent but the cause and principles for which they suffered, and the spirit which animated them in their heroic struggles? Their position at the foot of the altar of sacrifice shows forth the depressed condition of the cause, principles and spirit they represent. They are like the animals slain in sacrifice, and cast down beside the altar. To the same effect is the significance of the cry for judgment and vengeance, and the delay in the answer. The cause and principles represented by the martyrs are crushed under the opposing power of evil. Complete satisfaction for the martyr blood shed is still future, because evil still is strong. This condition must continue "until their servants also and their brethren,

which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled."

In Rev. 20: 4-6 that time has come, and in this vision the fulfilment of the promise is represented in similar imagery. The class of martyrs seen in Rev. 6: 9-11 reappears, accompanied by those who had now been "killed as they were." But now, instead of being as dead, at the foot of the altar of sacrifice, they live. Instead of having to cry with a great voice for judgment and vengeance, they have judgment given to them, and they sit enthroned and reign with Christ.

This vision shows the consummation of the long struggle between good and evil, God and Satan, which is traced in the symbolic representations between Rev. 6: 9-11 and Rev. 20: 1. The emissaries of Satan—the beast and the false prophet—have gradually been overcome. And now Satan himself is said to be bound, as the final issue of the long and desperate conflict, and the martyrs hold dominion with Christ. Now, if the martyrs represent the cause, principles and spirit of the martyrs, as we seem compelled to believe, unless we make both visions views of the actual rather than symbolic representations of what is real, then for the martyrs to live and sit enthroned and have judgment given to them, and reign with Christ, must mean that this cause and spirit and these principles, instead of continuing as though lifeless, through being overborne by the might of evil, now live, through asserting themselves with superior power. They judge and reign because these principles are recognized as the law by which life is to be

judged, and they now rule in the life of the world. Rev. 20: 1-6 gathers up into a single vision the results of the progress of the cause of Christ and the principles and the most devoted spirit of the Gospel, through a long process of conflict and gradual triumph, and symbols it forth in the enthronement and reign of the class of men who represent the highest life of the Church.

Just as the martyrs are said to live in the resurrection to life and power of the principles and spirit of which they are the highest representatives, so likewise the wicked are said to live in the resurrection to life and power of the principles which they represent. When it is said, therefore, that "the rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years were finished," or that the rest of the dead were to live when the thousand years had expired, it means that we are then to look for a resurrection to life and power of the principles and spirit of evil men, which had been practically dead during the millennial period, just as the principles and spirit represented in the highest way by the martyrs had been practically lifeless at the time referred to in Rev. 6: 9-11. And this is just what we do find. Just as Satan is represented as bound through the curbing of his power during the thousand years, at the close he is said to be loosed again, as his power again is manifested through the lives of men (Rev. 20: 7-10). This is the resurrection which is the second, of which that of Rev. 20: 4-6 is the first. Both resurrections are of the same kind and figurative. Both correspond to the

second death, which is also figurative. The two classes of men which represent the opposing spirit and principles and cause of righteousness and wickedness, of Christ and Satan, are said to live in the life and power of what they represent. This is one of the most common forms of expression in the Bible. The prodigal, when he abandoned the spirit of his home, died; when he was restored to a right mind again, he rose from the dead (Luke 15 : 32). When men are delivered from the dominion of sin and become righteous, they are said to be alive from the dead (Rom. 6 : 13). When nations are delivered from bondage, they are said to live again in their restored prosperity (Ezek. 37 : 12-14). In Rev. 11 the two witnesses are said to be slain and rise again from the dead, as the open testimony to the truth which they represent is suppressed or proclaimed. Allowing for the inevitable setting or drapery of all symbolic descriptions, which must not be pressed for a significance it was not intended to convey, this interpretation is not unsatisfactory; at least, it is not beset with the difficulties to which the literal explanation is exposed. The martyrs are said to reign with Christ but a thousand years, because it is only for this period that the principles and spirit they represent have unbroken sway over men. The judgment and the avenging of the blood of the martyrs, in answer to their cry (Rev. 6 : 9-11), is to be interpreted in the light of Rev. 19 : 2, "For he hath judged the great harlot, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and he hath avenged the blood of his

servants at her hand," "the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain" (Rev. 18: 24). The judgment and vengeance here spoken of was realized in the overthrow of the cause and system of wickedness which slew the martyrs and which is here represented by a harlot, just as the cause and principles of Christ's kingdom are represented by the martyrs. The pre-millennial interpretation would require us to believe that the prayer of the martyrs for judgment and vengeance was not answered until the resurrection of Rev. 20: 11 *sq.*—after the great uprising of wickedness. But the answer was to be delayed only until their brother martyrs had been killed. In Rev. 20: 4-6 we see them in company with these very martyrs that were afterward slain, showing that this is the time for the promised answer, and not after a subsequent period had run its course.

The judgment and vengeance asked for in Rev. 6: 9-11 are, therefore, to be looked for in the crushing of the persecuting cause of wickedness, through the triumph of the cause and principles of which the martyrs were the most faithful exponents, as represented in Rev. 20: 4-6.

We have not space to elaborate this interpretation at greater length. The reader must judge whether, on its merits, in view of the symbolic and figurative character of all the visions of Revelation, it is not preferable to the pre-millennial explanation. Are we not, at least, more than justified in accepting it in its general features, rather than wrest from their natural

and evident meaning all the plain and direct passages to which we have referred the reader, bearing on the questions of a general resurrection, a general judgment, and life in the flesh and probation after Christ comes again, as we must do, if we accept the alternative pre-millennial and literal interpretation of Rev. 20 : 4-6 ?

While Rev. 20 : 4-6 is the only direct passage claimed by Pre-millennialists in favor of a distinct resurrection of the righteous and another of the wicked with more than the millennium between, they refer to allusions which it is held can only be interpreted in harmony with their view. The chief of these is the expression, "resurrection from the dead," *ἐκ νεκρῶν*. The class of passages containing this expression, it is claimed, "represent the resurrection of believers as eclectic and special,* . . . refer to . . . a separation and quickening to life out from among the dead."

This argument at one time appeared to us to be very strong. A study of all the passages in which "resurrection from the dead" and "resurrection of the dead" occur, has greatly reduced our estimate of its force.

These are the facts :

1. The resurrection of our Lord, which is pre-eminently a resurrection from the dead, is twice spoken of as a resurrection of the dead.

Acts 26 : 23 : "How that the Christ must suffer,

* "Ecce Venit," p. 220.

and how that he first, by the resurrection of the dead, should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles."

This, of course, means, "that He first" by His own resurrection as He was "first born from the dead" (Col. 1 : 18) "should proclaim light," etc., His own resurrection being thus termed a resurrection of the dead.

Rom. 1 : 4 : "Who was declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection of the dead." This declaration was made by His own resurrection, which is again called a resurrection of the dead.

It is also more than probable that Acts 17 : 32, "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead," refers specially to the resurrection of Christ, spoken of in the preceding verse, thus making three instances in which our Lord's resurrection is spoken of as a "resurrection of the dead."

2. In only two cases is there mention made of a resurrection from the dead, apart from references to the resurrection of our Lord, of Lazarus, and Herod's guilty fear that John the Baptist had arisen from his grave. These are Luke 20 : 35 and Phil. 3 : 11. It is to be remarked, also, that while the record of our Lord's answer to the Sadducees in Luke 20 : 35 is, "They that are accounted worthy to attain to that world and the resurrection from the dead," etc., in Matt. 22 : 31, referring, as it would appear, to the same resurrection, it is said to be "of the dead."

3. Of the nine times in which the expression, "resurrection of the dead," is used of other than that of Christ (Matt. 22 : 31, Acts 23 : 6, 24 : 21, 1 Cor. 15 : 12, 13, 21, 42, Heb. 6 : 2) it is certainly used three times (Acts 23 : 6, 24 : 21, 1 Cor. 15 : 42)—most exegetes would say six times, reckoning in 1 Cor. 15 : 12, 13, 21 as well—where the apostle had only the resurrection of the righteous in his thought.

4. It is especially to be noticed that in 1 Cor., chap. 15, where, as is generally admitted, Paul has the righteous dead alone in mind, and in v. 42 where their resurrection alone can be alluded to, this resurrection is always referred to as a resurrection of the dead, and not once as a resurrection from the dead (vs. 12, 13, 21, 42).

Now, if Paul thought the resurrection of the righteous to be a first resurrection to glory from among the wicked dead, who were not to be raised for more than a thousand years, and in a second resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt, it would seem as though he must certainly have indicated it in the only chapter in which he treats at large of their rising from the dead, by using the expression, "resurrection from the dead," especially in v. 42. The use of the expression, "resurrection of the dead," in this whole chapter, makes it pretty evident that he did not have before him this conception of the resurrection of the righteous as from among the dead.

It is also difficult to believe that our Lord's resurrection should be referred to as a resurrection "of" as

well as "from" the dead, if the latter expression is intended to convey a meaning distinct from that of the former.

Neither let it be forgotten that the act of being raised or of rising, whether it be of saint or sinner, can be expressed in no other way than as being raised, or as a rising, "from the dead." In this case there cannot possibly be any thought of eclectic resurrection of some from among others who remain in their graves. The expressions are probably elliptical wherein being raised or rising from the dead is used for being raised from the place or state of the dead. Now, if there can be nothing of the eclectic idea in these verbal expressions, do we need import this significance into the substantive form, "resurrection from the dead"? May it not also be an elliptical expression, meaning resurrection from the place or state of the dead? In view of the interchangeable way in which "from" and "of" the dead are found to be used, and also of Paul's use of "resurrection of the dead" in the chapter, of all others, in which we should expect the other form, were it intended to mean what our pre-millennial brethren declare, are we justified in freighting it with so large a significance? It may be added that the great majority of commentators pass over the expression, "resurrection from the dead," as though this form "from the dead" had no special significance.

Phil. 3:11, "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead," is not difficult of

explanation in harmony with this view. The apostle had in mind, when writing, the blessedness which should come to believers at their resurrection, as is made evident by the following verses, not necessarily any idea of a special resurrection of the righteous in point of time before that of the wicked. His longing and striving were for the blessedness of this resurrection of the righteous, which only he had in thought, irrespective of the question whether they were raised with or before the wicked.

Another argument for a separate resurrection of the righteous is sometimes urged, on the ground that New Testament writers so frequently refer to the resurrection of saints exclusively. 1 Cor., chap. 15, and 2 Cor. 4:14 *sq.*, are especially instanced. It is argued that Paul could scarcely have failed to make any reference to the resurrection of the wicked, if he had supposed them to share in the same general resurrection with the righteous. But this form of reasoning is very unsafe. We might just as well argue, when we read that Christ died for His sheep, and no reference is made to His death availing for all men, that He must have died a second time for them. The explanation is that in the connection in which such passages stand, the writer is treating of the righteous only, and naturally refers to their resurrection alone. Pre-millennialists themselves do not place much stress on this argument, and many omit it altogether in their discussions. We merely mention it.

This finishes the discussion of our subject as it

relates to two resurrections and what is involved in this fundamental pre-millennial conception. We have sought to give the evidence for the view we hold candidly, and with a desire to avoid a strained and one-sided interpretation, while endeavoring to give interpretations which will harmonize the teachings of the New Testament, rather than bring them into conflict. We have also sought fairly to meet the arguments urged in favor of the pre-millennial view. The reader must judge for himself of our success.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KINGDOM.

PRE-MILLENNIALISTS differ from Post-millennialists in their conception of the kingdom and reign of Christ. They hold that the kingdom of Christ is not yet established, although its principles have sway in the souls of believers. It is to be set up at His second coming. His rule in that kingdom is to be personal and visible, on the earth, and during the millennium, at least. During this time He will not only reign through the might of love and spiritual motive in men's hearts, but also through compulsion over those who do not otherwise submit to Him. The chief support for this conception of the kingdom of our Lord they find in a literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, special prominence being given to the promise to David that his throne should continue forever.

On the other hand, Post-millennialists believe that our Lord set up His kingdom at His first coming, and that He took His seat as ruler in this kingdom, when He rose from the dead and all power was given into His hands. He is now seated on David's throne, ruling

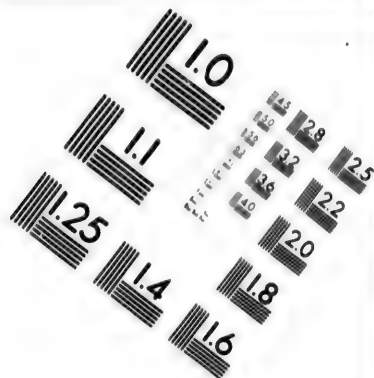
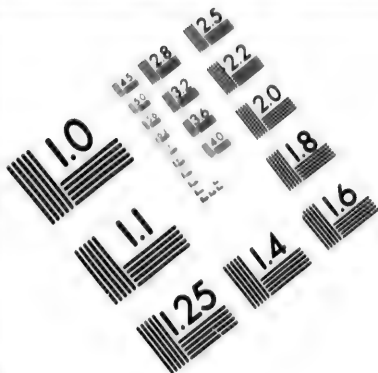
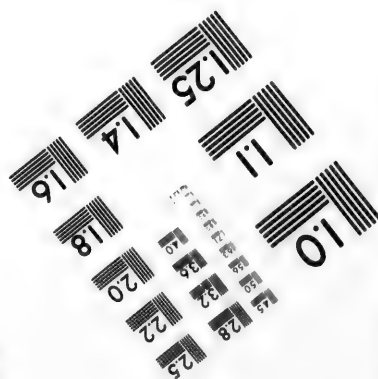
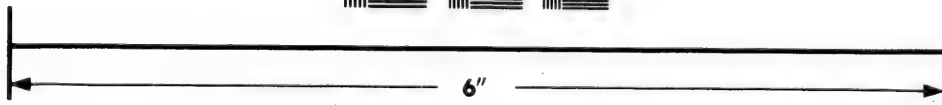
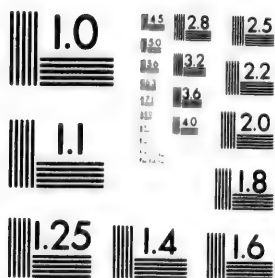


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in the kingdom of grace, which is His only kingdom on earth. This is to continue until His second coming with the resurrection of the dead and the judgment, when the eternal kingdom of glory will succeed in its growing fulness, and for all who have become members of the kingdom of His grace. Christ is never to reign visibly and in person on the earth, in the kingdom of grace, even if He is thus to reign in that of glory. His kingdom on the earth is spiritual, and His rule through the millennium is to continue to be what it is at present, one of inner motive exclusively. Old Testament prophecy urged in favor of the pre-millennial view of the kingdom, when interpreted as the New Testament writers explain it, finds its fulfilment in the present dispensation.

It will thus be seen that the pre-millennial conception of the kingdom is almost identical with that of the Jews. Accepting the same literal interpretation of prophecies respecting it, it is scarcely possible to reach any other conclusion. Dr. Nicholson says: "Christ . . . should succeed to David's throne precisely as a son succeeds his father; that He should succeed to it as being so identically David's throne, that He would have as the inherited subjects of His kingdom 'the house of Jacob,' or, as elsewhere expressed, Judah and Israel—the self-same people whom David ruled; that, therefore, He should be a visible king reigning on earth."* This and similar sentiments are found in

* "Prophetic Studies," 1886, p. 144.

all pre-millennial writings. The Jews were not so much in error in their conception of the nature of the kingdom the Messiah was to establish. But this kingdom, instead of being associated with His first, was to be set up at His second coming. Whether our Lord and the apostles endorsed this Jewish idea of His rule will be considered later. At the outset we must give attention to this question of the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy. It is, of course, too large a subject to deal with further than as it is related to the question in hand, or otherwise than briefly.

Pre-millennialists urge the following argument in favor of their interpretation. The prophecies concerning the birth, life and death of our Lord have had a literal fulfilment. Therefore, we must expect a similar fulfilment of those which relate to His kingdom and reign.

This argument seems to have force. Let us examine it :

1. It is only presumptive ; for it does not necessarily follow that prophecies about the birth, life and death of our Lord and those concerning His kingdom and rule should be fulfilled in the same way.

2. It is also to be noticed that the prophecies about the birth, life and death of Christ are incapable of any other than a literal fulfilment. How could He be born of a virgin in Bethlehem, become a man, be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, make His grave with the wicked, etc., except in a literal way ? If He was to be a real being, then He must have a

real birth into a real life, and the incidents of that real life would all be real, and prophecies of them would have a literal fulfilment. It does not follow, because prophecies which are of such a nature that they are incapable of any other than a literal fulfilment, are fulfilled literally, that those which are capable of another than a literal fulfilment, must be fulfilled in the same way. This, as it seems to us, completely sets aside all presumption in favor of the literal interpretation of prophecies of His kingdom and rule, as claimed by Pre-millennialists.

3. The great question is, whether our Lord has established a spiritual kingdom—a rule over men's spirits, which is called a kingdom. If this be admitted—and who can deny it?—then it is more reasonable to argue that, as Christ was to be a real being, all the prophecies about His life are to be fulfilled literally in the real life He was to live; but, as He was to establish a spiritual kingdom, in which He was to rule spiritually after His death, that the prophecies about His kingdom and rule refer to this kingdom and rule, and are to be fulfilled spiritually. What right have we to assume that these prophecies refer to another than the kingdom and rule we know our Lord to have established, so long as they are capable of being interpreted in harmony with this known kingdom? Can anyone be justified in giving an interpretation to these prophecies which makes it impossible to refer them to this known kingdom, and then declare there must be another kingdom, of which we know nothing, in order to make this unnecessary interpretation possible?

4. But an examination of the prophecies themselves shows that they cannot be interpreted literally, because thus explained, they lead to impossible conclusions. Among others are the following:

(a) The Jewish commonwealth, with its priesthood, feasts, sacrifices and worship, will be restored, in connection with the kingdom which our Lord is to set up. Isaiah 66 : 20-24 is regarded as a description of the period of the kingdom, and mention is here made of "the house of the Lord," to which "the children of Israel bring their offerings in clean vessels." "Priests and Levites" are to be chosen for service. "New moons and Sabbaths" will be observed and "all flesh shall come to worship" before the Lord, in His temple at Jerusalem, from week to week. "No alien, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh" shall enter Jehovah's sanctuary (Ezek. 44 : 9). The feast of tabernacles will then be observed, etc. (Zech. 14 : 16). The sanctuary and the tabernacle are to be set up again (Ezek. 37 : 26, 27).

(b) This Jewish commonwealth, with all its restored Jewish ritual and worship, together with the Gentiles who adopt Judaism, constitutes the visible kingdom over which our Lord is visibly to rule (Ezek. 37 : 21-28; comp. Zech. 14 : 16). The Israelites are to be gathered as one people (v. 22) and dwell in the land "given unto Jacob" (v. 25), and David—Christ on the throne of David—shall be their king (vs. 24, 25).

(c) This kingdom and worship is to continue forever. "Judah and Jerusalem" shall abide forever (Joel 3 : 20). The rule of David's line—fulfilled in Christ—and the priests, Levites and sacrifices shall

never cease (Jer. 33 : 17, 18). "My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore" (Ezek. 37 : 28). Now, if the word "forever" has here a limited meaning, as is probable, it at least means till the end of the age or period spoken of. If these prophecies, therefore, are of the reign of our Lord during the millenium, as our pre-millennial friends declare, then there is to be a restored Judaism until the close of this period, or as long as our Lord rules as King on the earth.

If the word "forever" really means here without end, as it sometimes does, as this kingdom is thought to be on the earth and forever, the interpretation which makes His rule personal and visible, makes it personal and visible on earth forever. In addition to the passages referred to above, read also Micah 4 : 7 and Dan. 7 : 14.

(d) There is to be the rule of physical force, as the enemies of our Lord are dashed in pieces (Ps. 2), and the nation and the kingdom which will not serve "Israel" "shall perish" and be "utterly wasted" (Isa. 60 : 12).

(e) Those that submit and accept Judaism become the servants or slaves of the Jews (Isa. 14 : 1, 2 ; 61 : 5 ; 60 : 14 ; 49 : 23, etc.).

That the passages referred to, and others which might be quoted, do plainly teach what is claimed above, when literally interpreted, is tacitly, if not avowedly, admitted by different classes of Pre-millennialists. All classes of them believe that these prophecies teach the restoration of Israel to Canaan. But is this more plainly taught than that, at their return,

they shall reinstitute their whole ritual, and be recognized as the people and kingdom of Christ, into membership in which none can enter unless they adopt Judaism?

May we not require them to carry their literal interpretation through, and demand that they accept not only the return of the Jews and our Lord's visible rule over them and those who are joined to them, but also the description of their religious institutions as well?

But the majority of Pre-millennialists go further than this. They admit themselves bound by their interpretation to the reinstatement of the Jewish sacrifices, rites and observances, after their restoration to their own land. They endeavor, however, to stop short of the full extent to which the literal interpretation would seem to compel them to go. The Jews are to be restored to their own land before they are converted. They set up their old ritual, which continues until they believe in Christ, and then the Jewish sacrifices, etc., are abandoned. But if anything is plain this is just what these prophecies, literally interpreted, absolutely forbid. The glory of the kingdom culminates in the restoration of Israel's ancient religious ritual and services. Isaiah's last vision is of officiating priests and Levites, of the people presenting their offerings and thronging to Jerusalem to the Sabbath and the new moon observances. So, also, of Zechariah. His closing vision of what Pre-millennialists assume to be the millennial era, is of the remnant of the Gentile nations, as proselytes to Judaism, going up yearly to Jerusalem to worship

the king, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles (14: 16), of the people preparing their sacrifices in vessels holy to the Lord, and to service rendered to Him in His house, into which no Canaanite—uncircumcised—is permitted to enter. In all the prophetic descriptions there is no hint that the Jewish ritual, when reinstituted, is to give place to anything else. It is an integral part of the glory of the kingdom under the rule of the Son of David, and is said expressly, as above, to continue forever. This can mean nothing less, at least, than to the end of the millennial age, to which it is said to belong.

So evident is this that many of the most candid Pre-millennialists of the last generation were forced to the conclusion that the rites and sacrifices of the Jewish dispensation are to be observed in the millennial period, and they hazarded conjectures as to the purpose they are to serve.*

The most of the pre-millennial writers of to-day make no attempt to face these difficulties.

This is equally true of force succeeding the reign of spiritual motive, in case of the unrighteous, when our Lord is supposed to set up His kingdom. There is a section of Pre-millennialists who are forced to believe, from their literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, that when Christ comes as king in His kingdom, it will be to crush all opposers by His might.

* Rev. M. Fay, "The Second Advent," pp. 120, 583-86; Rev. W. R. Freemantle, "Lent. Lectures," pp. 276-79; Rev. M. Bocett, "Israel's Sins and Israel's Hopes," pp. 271-73; Rev. W. Pryn, "Good Things to Come," pp. 165-67; Rev. A. Bonar, "Coming and Kingdom," p. 222; Rev. C. Molyneux, "Israel's Future," pp. 252-58; see also Blackstone, "Jesus is Coming," p. 134.

Thus it is seen that each of the conclusions we have referred to as necessary from the literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, is admitted by different classes of Pre-millennialists—a pretty sure evidence were any proof, additional to what is so evident from the passages cited and from others which might be mentioned, needed, that this interpretation does legitimately lead to such conclusions.

Can we believe that the progress of the ages from the material and sensuous into the more spiritual shall be reversed? Is it possible that God will write failure upon His work in establishing Christianity by abandoning it for Judaism, with its priesthood and sacrifices, its rites and symbols, its physical force and its unsparing rigor? Is the culmination of the religious progress of the ages to be but a return to an effete and vanished system, adapted, as we had supposed, to the race when it was ignorant and unspiritual, and which, it was hoped, mankind had long outgrown? We surely are not required to accept a system of interpretation which makes such demands, unless there is no other which can save us from conclusions so anomalous and incredible. But there is more than the inherent improbability of all this against it. If anything is made plain in the New Testament, especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is that the sacrifices and priesthood, etc., of the Jewish dispensation were typical of Christ, His work and sacrificial death, and had their fulfilment in Him, and were so abolished forever.

If Paul also believed Old Testament prophecy

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taught that a restored Judaism, with its circumcision and its ritual, was to constitute the final realization of Christianity, could he have ventured to oppose so strenuously the Judaizing teachers of his own time? Could he have warned the Galatians that to accept circumcision and what it involved was to forfeit the benefits of Christ's redemption?

It is also strange that Paul, with all his yearning over his own people and desire to comfort them, never told them that the time was coming when Judaism should be restored, and their nation, with their old religion, should dominate the world under the Messiah—the Christ whom they were so long to reject. He might have added: "Your ideas of the Messiah and His kingdom, and of the part your nation is to play under Him, is according to the teaching of the prophets. Only you are wrong in supposing this is to occur in connection with His first coming. In connection with His first coming, and for centuries after, you must abandon Judaism, in order to be His followers. But in connection with His second, when He comes to set up His kingdom, you must restore Judaism, and all who would share in the full glory of His reign must accept the ritual that for centuries He demanded must be abandoned, before they could have part with Him." We do not think this overdraws the antagonism between the conclusions rendered necessary by the literal interpretation of the prophecies of the Old Testament and the teaching of the New. As we discuss the question of the kingdom more particularly, we shall refer to one phase of this subject in greater detail.

CHAPTER VII.

THE KINGDOM (*Continued*).

LET us carefully examine the teaching of the New Testament on the questions which divide Pre-millennialists and Post-millennialists as to the kingdom. Is it taught that this kingdom will not be set up until Christ's second coming, that it will be on earth and territorial rather than, or even as well as, over men's hearts, and that our Lord will reign in personal and visible presence, when it is established?

The first feature of the teaching of the Gospels which strikes us is, that it is represented as both present and approaching. From the time of John "the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it" (Luke 16: 16). In the parables of Matt. 13, different features of a present kingdom are spoken of. It is never "the kingdom of heaven shall be like," etc. The rich man might have found entrance into the kingdom of heaven, rather than turn away, and suggest to our Lord the statement that "it is hard for a rich man to enter into" it (Matt. 19: 16-25). Whatever Matt. 16: 19 may mean, it at least declares that the power

Peter received was to be exercised by him in connection with a present kingdom.

"Whosoever will humble himself and become as a little child is greatest" in that kingdom already; not shall be at some future day. The scribes and Pharisees do not enter into the kingdom of heaven, neither do they "suffer them that are entering in to enter" (Matt. 23: 13, etc.).

It is also spoken of as "at hand"; John the Baptist (Matt. 3: 2); our Lord himself (Matt. 4: 17); His apostles (Matt. 10: 7); and the seventy (Luke 10: 9, etc.).

Now, neither of these representations, if they be indeed different representations, leaves room for the idea that this kingdom is still future. Many Pre-millennialists attempt to explain away this difficulty by saying that our Lord came to set up His visible kingdom and reign, expecting His ancient people to receive Him; but through their rejection of Him, His purpose was defeated, and the kingdom was deferred until His second advent.*

It will be noticed, however, that our Lord did not say, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, if the Jews receive me. His declaration of its presence was absolute. He could not, therefore, on this supposition, have foreknown that they would reject Him. He must have misinterpreted Isa. 53 and the other prophecies of the rejection of the Messiah. Their rejection of Him must have come to Him as a surprise,

* See *e.g.*, "Jesus is Coming," p. 36; "Prophetic Studies," p. 46.

and the delay in setting up His kingdom as an afterthought. Had they received Him, also, then He would have gone to His throne and not to the cross. Then there would have been no need that He should die and make atonement, in order that God should highly exalt Him (Phil. 2: 9, 10). It is strange that anyone should attempt to save a theory at the cost of such conceptions of the foreknowledge and immutability of Christ, and the absolute necessity of His atoning work, as are thus involved.

It does not directly concern us in this discussion to inquire in what sense the kingdom was present during our Lord's life and in what sense still to come. We believe, however, the distinction is to be found in this: While the kingdom, as a spiritual rule in the hearts of men, had begun, during our Lord's life, as He taught its principles and gained followers, it was not until He had completed His atoning work and had been gifted with "all authority in heaven and earth" (Matt. 28: 18) to administer its government and advance it among men, that it was formally instituted.

In this connection let us call attention to another point. Pre-millennialists hold that the coming of our Lord, which was said to be near and imminent in so many passages, was His second personal coming to set up His kingdom. If this be so, is it not strange that, while the writers of the epistles so frequently speak of the coming of the Lord as nigh, they never thus speak of His kingdom, although they make frequent reference to it? Is it not difficult to believe that

these two events can be associated together, when one is so often said to be near, and the other is never thus spoken of?

The nature of this kingdom and rule is also very clearly taught in the New Testament. It "is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14: 17). It is not material but spiritual. It "is not of this world" *κοσμός* (John 18 : 36). Those who become members of it must be born from above (John 3 : 3-5), must have a real righteousness (Matt. 5 : 20). Position in it is gained through meekness and humility (18 : 4). The members of this kingdom have their citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3 : 20). This kingdom is unseen, as it exists in, or in the midst of men, so that it cometh not with observation (Luke 17 : 21). It is the antipodes of the power of darkness, and the Colossian believers had all been already translated into it, when they had been delivered from this awful power (Col. 1 : 13).

These and other passages make it plain that our Lord's rule in this kingdom is not territorial, but over men's hearts, as they are conformed to His image through the new birth, and thus gladly acknowledge His sway. It is enlarged, not by taking in new lands, but new hearts. It is pushed forward, not by omnipotent might, but by omnipotent love. Subjection is not formal and of the outward life, but real, of the spirit as well. In this kingdom He is ruling now. He does not need to come in person and use His omnipotent might in order to exercise this sway. This kingdom and rule continue to enlarge as the

Gospel of the kingdom (Luke 9 : 2 ; comp. v. 6), or the word of the kingdom (Matt. 13 : 19) is proclaimed.

This conception of the kingdom helps us to understand another of its aspects which is still future. This kingdom of grace on earth issues in the eternal kingdom of glory in heaven. Therefore it is that Paul declares "The Lord will save me unto his heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4 : 18). It is also to be noticed that in the first verse of this chapter, he charges Timothy, by the Lord's "appearing and his kingdom" to preach the Word. Can we doubt that the kingdom which He associates with the Lord's second coming is the heavenly kingdom He speaks of in v. 18, rather than a millennial kingdom on earth, as Pre-millennialists believe? Peter also (? Pet. 1 : 11) speaks of "entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," referring to the everlasting kingdom of glory. The reward to those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake is to become sharers in the kingdom of heaven with its great reward in heaven (Matt. 5 : 10-12), and those who belong to it are commanded to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, for it is only there that they can be safe (Matt. 6 : 19). To the rich young man who asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life" (John 10 : 17), our Lord gave instructions how he might have "treasures in heaven" (v. 21), and when he refused to comply with them, Jesus said "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God" (v. 23), showing that the great blessedness of entrance into the kingdom of God was

in securing treasures in heaven. After telling his disciples that it was the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom (Luke 12 : 32), instead of referring them to a reign in this kingdom on earth as their great reward, he urges them to secure treasure in heaven and to have their hearts there (vs. 33, 34), and not be filled with the thought of any future glory on the earth. "Many shall come from the east, etc., and shall sit down with Abraham, etc., in the kingdom of heaven: but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast into the outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8 : 11, 12). This is not the description of the sitting down, etc., in the millennial kingdom of our pre-millennial brethren; for they believe that at the beginning, or before it is set up, the sons of the kingdom, or the Jews, shall be gathered into it, and shall have first place, next to the king. It is a description of the kingdom in heaven and not on earth, as the outer darkness and the weeping and gnashing of teeth (references to the lost in Hades) of those who are cast out abundantly show. It is this kingdom of God in heaven which "flesh and blood cannot inherit" (1 Cor. 15 : 50). The kingdom here spoken of is the one which believers inherit after the resurrection, as the connection of this verse shows. Now, the earthly millennial kingdom, according to pre-millennial conception, is one in which a great host of saints in the flesh shall have a share. In this place, where above all others, perhaps, we might expect the reference to be to this earthly kingdom, were there to be such

a one, it is definitely and decisively excluded—a pretty sure indication that Paul had no knowledge of it.

Are we not then—in view of all these passages and of others which might be adduced—compelled to believe that the aspect of the kingdom of heaven under which it is spoken of as future, is the kingdom as it is in the heavenly glory, where there shall be the realization of its aims and blessedness in ever-growing fulness? In all the passages quoted, and they constitute nearly all the allusions to the kingdom in the New Testament, there is no reference to a future territorial and material reign of our Lord on earth; in the most of them, this idea is absolutely ruled out.

The expression “shall” or “shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” if it refers to the kingdom at all as future, must mean become sharers in the kingdom of glory. “Thy kingdom come” in the Lord’s prayer must be joined with “Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth,” or it may mean, come in the complete realization of its purpose, in bringing all men into loving subjection to Christ. We do not need to introduce any visible reign of Christ in an earthly kingdom to explain this passage. The kingdom of God, into which Paul said the Ephesians must enter through much tribulation (Acts 14:22), and of which the Thessalonians sought to be worthy through suffering (2 Thess. 1:4, 5), does not need to be a visible kingdom on earth, but the grander kingdom of glory, with its rewards in heaven. “If we endure, we shall also

reign with him" (2 Tim. 2 : 12) does not require us to think it a reign on earth, but in the eternal glory spoken of in v. 10. Is it not the absurdity of literalism to infer from Luke 22 : 29, 30, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom," that this is to be a material kingdom, rather than consider the form of expression, "eat and drink," etc., as determined by the circumstances which suggested this whole passage? In any case, Pre-millennialists believe this kingdom will not be enjoyed by the apostles until after their resurrection, and if they are then to eat and drink, why not in heaven as well as on earth, and, if at all, why not forever? This is considered by Blackstone "the strongest proof that the kingdom will be literal and material." As well might we believe that Rev. 3 : 20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me," is to be taken literally. Both passages refer to the condescending and intimate fellowship our Lord is to hold with His people. Matt. 26 : 29 may well be interpreted in a similar way. The passage which was once urged most strongly for the doctrine of a material kingdom is Rev. 5 : 10. But it was without manuscript authority, as in the old version, and the revised version gives it, "They reign on the earth," not "They shall reign." As this vision is of the redeemed prior to the millennium, the reign, as already exercised, cannot be of a visible and

material kind, our pre-millennial friends themselves being judges.

"Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6: 2) is urged in favor of a literal and material kingdom here on earth. But this is followed by "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" in v. 3. Now; if v. 2 proves that the saints are to share in the literal judgment of the world, meaning the wicked of the world, then v. 3 must mean that there is really to be a literal judgment of holy angels, in which the saints are likewise to share. It is safe to say that a future judgment of angels in this literal sense is foreign to the teaching of the New Testament. It would be very unsafe to base so large an inference upon this one obscure passage. If it does not refer to judgment in this literal personal sense, in the one case, it does not in the other. May it not mean that the saints may judge the world and angels in the sense that the standard of their life and thought is that by which the world shall be condemned and the angels justified? In any case, the saints might have a part with Christ in judging the wicked, and still there be no personal reign of Christ on the earth. In the passage "judge" can scarcely mean "rule," for in this sense it could hardly be thought to be over angels. The apostles sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19: 28), is a passage of acknowledged difficulty. The judging is restricted to the twelve and is not a general function of all the redeemed. Every one who has denied himself for Christ's sake (v. 29) "shall receive an hundredfold";

but the apostles only are to judge. It is a special function exercised over Israel, and it will be over believing Israel, as most Pre-millennialists suppose; for they hold that Israel is to be converted before the second advent, or, at least, in connection with it. Whatever it may mean, therefore, it constitutes slight evidence for a personal reign of our Lord and His people on the earth. We have already given extended notice of Rev. 20 : 4-6. It may be added, in this connection, that nothing is said in that passage about a reign on the earth; it is "reign with Christ," that is all. If the interpretation we have given of this passage be along the right line, then it has no reference to a personal reign. In Matt. 21 : 43, "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof," the meaning doubtless is that the special offer of its blessings to the Jews as the ancient people of God, shall be withdrawn, and its blessings be opened to the Gentiles, who would be prepared to bring forth its fruits. This began to be fulfilled when Paul at Antioch turned to the Gentiles (Acts 13 : 46), and when at Rome, after "testifying the kingdom of God" to the Jews (Acts 28 : 23) and their rejection of his message, he declared, "Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they will also hear" (v. 28). It is significant that the kingdom of the Pre-millennialists is one in which the Jews are to have the first place.

We have now referred to about all the passages in the New Testament, pertinent to the question under

discussion. That the kingdom of heaven is spiritual, a reign in men's hearts, and not material, over earth as a territory—that this kingdom and reign began when our Lord was on earth, was more formally established at His ascension to the right hand of power, and that our Lord is now exercising His rule, seem abundantly manifest. If this is made clear, we must not assume that the principles and methods of this kingdom are to be revolutionized at some future time, and a rule of force as well as of grace in a material kingdom begun, unless upon the clearest evidence. Still less should we be disposed to do this, if we bear in mind that God's kingdom on earth was once of this character, and that it has issued forth from the more material into the spiritual. A conception of it which requires us to believe it will revert back to the more material, is too much like progress ending in retrogression, at least in some of its features, to be acceptable. The support, also, which Pre-millennialists claim for this belief from the New Testament is in allusions which are scant and not without obscurity. It is doing them no wrong to state that their chief reliance, to make good their claim that our Lord is to reign personally on the earth, is upon Old Testament prophecy, in connection with their belief in the restoration of the Jews to their own land. We proceed to consider the prophetic teaching upon which they depend.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KINGDOM (*Concluded*).

PRE-MILLENNIALISTS hold that the throne of David, spoken of in Old Testament prophecy, is distinctively our Lord's throne. They claim that He is now sitting on His Father's throne, at His right hand, and has not yet assumed rule in His own kingdom. It is only at His second coming that He steps down from this throne to take that of His earthly father David, and rule in His proper kingdom.

It is a reign of our Lord in person, from His throne in Jerusalem, over a subject world.*

Bishop Nicholson, in the address from which I have already quoted, puts the view very eloquently: "In the Davidic sonship He takes the kingdom that has descended to Him, the earthly throne that He has inherited, reigning therefrom in all essential attributes of our manhood, yet robed in the majesty of His God-

*In discussion, prominent Pre-millennialists sometimes deny that their view of the millennial kingdom involves the personal and continued presence of Christ on earth, or the presence here of saints in resurrection bodies. But how can Christ reign personally, and how can saints share in the blessings of this earthly kingdom, unless they are present in person on the earth? The anomalies involved in the pre-millennial conception of the millennial kingdom cannot be avoided by any denials of this sort.

hood. Thus His Davidic heirship will have been made available by reason of His accomplished atonement, and as a priest as well as a king, He will sit on the throne of His glory. A theocracy, then, the kingdom of the Christ will be, a divine-human monarchy, wherein, as well as the Saviour and the supreme object of worship, the world's supreme civil ruler He will be. Men shall see the king in His beauty, evangelist divine, society's regenerator, creation's master, glorious in holiness doing wonders."*

As we have already remarked, this interpretation of prophecies referring to the exaltation and reign of our Lord, as well as those describing the future exaltation of Israel, is identical with that of the Jews themselves. Let us see whether this interpretation can be adopted and not lead to impossible conclusions—conclusions which not only have no support in the New Testament, but which are in contradiction to its teaching.

In order to get a clear view of the question, we must go back to the covenant promises made to Abraham and David, and strive to learn whether their assurances, taken in a literal way all through, have been or can be fulfilled.

Let us turn first to Gen. 17: 7, 8: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and

* "Prophetic Studies," p. 143.

to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession." In the renewal of the covenant (Gen. 22 : 18) there is added, "and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

This covenant was renewed to Isaac (Gen. 26 : 3-5), and to Jacob (Gen. 35 : 12). Do these promises that the descendants of Abraham shall possess the land of Canaan throughout their generation for an everlasting possession, assure that Israel shall again, as a nation, rule Palestine? If Dr. West's statement, in "Prophetic Studies," p. 126, is correct, and "God's covenant with Abraham is all of grace, and therefore unconditional," if it is taken literally, its promises have been broken. For nearly two thousand years the Israelites have not possessed the land of Canaan "in their generations." They have not continued to hold it as an "everlasting" possession, even in any restricted sense in which this word may be used. These promises, therefore, which give no pledge of continued possession, in a literal way, can give no assurance of restored possession, when it is once lost. According to Leviticus, chap. 26, however, it appears that the covenant was conditioned upon obedience, and its blessings lost through disobedience. Repentance only could restore them when forfeited. How, and how far, the Israelites would repent and the blessings of the old covenants be theirs, is not declared. No safe argument for a restored kingdom of Israel in Canaan can possibly be urged from this covenant

made with Abraham and renewed with Isaac and Jacob.

A flood of light, however, is thrown upon the whole question by New Testament teaching. So far as the "seed" of Abraham was to be the medium or channel of blessing to "all nations," Paul declares Gen. 22:18, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," to have received its fulfilment in Christ (Gal. 3:16): "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many: but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." So far as the seed of Abraham are the objects of blessing, it is of blessing which must come through Christ, and as to these blessings, "There can be neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal. 3:28), "circumcision and uncircumcision" (Col. 3:11), but all are one in Christ; so that, "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29), because in the gospel dispensation, "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter" (Rom. 2:28, 29). They "are the circumcision"—the Jews in the gospel sense—"who worship God in the spirit," etc. (Phil. 3:3). Therefore it is that the "middle wall of partition" is broken down so that the Ephesian Gentiles who had been "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise" might have the fullest participation in all their blessings through the common condition of accepting the

Gospel (Eph. 2 : 11-19), and thus become "fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph. 3 : 6). All the blessings of the covenants made to Abraham, therefore, instead of descending to his literal seed, are inherited by believers, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. On the other hand, none of these blessings shall descend to any because of mere fleshly descent, be they Jews or Gentiles. The fleshly line of natural descent issues in the spiritual line of those who are children of Abraham through having like faith (Rom. 4 : 16). If, therefore, these promises of the covenant made to Abraham assure to any the possession of the land of Canaan and a national rule, it will be to all believers and not to the Jews as a people. But if the New Testament interpretation of the promises of this covenant forbid that they be taken literally for the natural seed of Abraham, why are we required to hold that the inheritance is the literal and physical Canaan? The truth is, if the Jews are to be restored to their old land as a people, we must depend upon other Scriptures than the covenant promise to Abraham to assure us of it.

Pre-millennialists, however, believe that the covenant made with David not only confirms their interpretation that the one to Abraham assures the restoration of Canaan to Israel, but also makes it plain that our Lord shall reign over restored Israel in person, and involves their whole doctrine of His glorious and visible rule over all the earth. Let us examine the

terms of this Davidic covenant, to see whether this conclusion is justified.

This covenant is first given in 2 Sam. 7: 12-18, especially v. 16: "And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever." It is referred to in Ps. 89: 4: "Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations," and repeated in vs. 29, 35, 36 in substantially the same terms. It is also of this covenant that Jeremiah speaks (Jer. 33: 21): "Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne" (as specified in v. 17): "David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel." Similarly he declares of the Jewish worship, "Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to burn oblations, and to do sacrifice continually" (v. 18).

Now, no literal interpretation of these covenant promises which makes them refer to a rule over Israel as a people, or to the ancient priestly and Levitical offerings and sacrifices, can be carried through. They assure an unbroken rule of David's seed, and an unbroken succession of priests and Levites offering gifts and sacrifices before the Lord. The rule is over Israel, and the priests and Levites performing their functions are in Israel. Any interpretation to serve the literalists in their claim that these passages assure the restoration of the Jews to their old land, to enjoy rule and glory under David's greater Son, is an interpretation which proves these

prophecies false. The unbroken rule of David's line, and the unbroken succession of priests, Levites and sacrifices, are as clearly declared as the fact of the rule and priesthood, and sacrifices. But there has been neither king on the throne of Israel, nor sacrifices, for nearly two thousand years. Neither the one nor the other has been unbroken, if they must be taken literally. Unless these are to be held as false prophecies, they must be interpreted in some other way.

Not less do the terms of these prophecies, in other respects, as we have seen is true of other prophecies, render this interpretation impossible. The priests, Levites and sacrifices are declared to be perpetual in the same terms as is the rule. So long, therefore, as Christ shall sit on His throne, in the sense Pre-millennialists hold that He will, so long must priests, Levites and sacrifices continue, in the same sense. The priests and sacrifices must be as literal as the reign, and continue as long. How many of the Pre-millennialists of to-day are willing to accept this necessary outcome of their interpretation, and believe a restored Judaism to be the final issue of Christianity? But, if they say that we are not required to believe that priests, etc., are ever to continue the same literal priests and sacrifices as at the beginning, why then must the rule necessarily continue to be of the same visible and personal kind as was David's?

So also the reign of David's line was to be over Israel. Not only is there no mention made of any other than Israelites as under this rule, but all others than

Israelites and their proselytes are expressly ruled out in other passages. Not only the uncircumcised in heart, but the uncircumcised in flesh, are excluded from the sanctuary (Ezek. 44: 9, which is held to be a description of the millennial kingdom). The Davidic line is as plainly declared to rule over Israel exclusively, meaning by Israel the Jews, their proselytes and subjects, as it is promised rule at all. If the rule, therefore, must continue to be of the same personal and visible kind as was David's at the beginning, so must it be over the same Israel exclusively as that which David ruled. This, then, is one aspect of the state of things to which the pre-millennial interpretation commits us as the final outcome of the religious growth of the ages. A triumphant Jewish nation, and an everlasting Judaism. In Christ there *is* to be Jew and Gentile. The middle wall of partition *is* to be restored. The Jews, notwithstanding their long rejection of Christ, are not only to be saved, but are to be exalted to supreme dignity over those who have accepted Him centuries before. The descendants of the Jews who have been accepting Him from the first age, and, from intermarriage with Gentiles, have lost their connection with their own ancient people, will have to take lower rank than those who have persistently opposed Him until His second coming. All Christians, Gentiles as well as Jews, as a reward for their earlier submission to Christ, will be required to accept the Jewish ritual, and take inferior rank under those who have resisted Him till the end.

No, our pre-millennial brethren cannot accept this

outcome of their literal interpretation. But if they admit these prophecies do not shut us in to Christ's personal and visible reign over Israel exclusively, why should they shut us in to a personal reign at all, seeing that both the reign itself and the fact that it is over Israel, are declared with equal explicitness to be literal forever, if literal at all or for either ?

But is there an interpretation which is less open to objection ? We believe there is, and that it is given by the New Testament writers, especially the apostle Paul.

Our Lord was the antitype of David. Peter declares this at Pentecost. It was not of himself that David said, "My flesh shall rest in hope because thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2 : 26-28; comp. Ps. 16 : 10), but of "the resurrection of the Christ" (v. 31). Peter also declares David "being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him," in that very covenant promise of 2 Sam. 7 : 16, from which Pre-millennialists derive their chief argument for a reign of Christ on earth, "that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne; he foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of the Christ" (vs. 30, 31). "Being therefore," Peter further explains, "by the right hand of God exalted," through the resurrection, and, most certainly, to this promised throne of David, "and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath poured forth," in the exercise of His kingly function on this throne, "this which ye see and hear." Peter

further declares that Ps. 110: 1 is an express prediction of Christ's exaltation to the throne promised to David's seed in 2 Sam. 7: 16, and from which he has poured out the Holy Ghost (vs. 34, 35). "Let all the house of Israel, therefore," in view of the argument he has just concluded—this house of Israel that has crucified Christ and is expecting Messiah to come as a national ruler, as do Pre-millennialists—let Israel know assuredly the truth which runs counter to their bitterest prejudices "that God hath made him both Lord and Christ" (v. 36). He is now, as Messiah, seated on the throne of the Messiah promised to David and to his seed. Can this language and this argument be forced to mean that our Lord was not to ascend this promised throne, and to exercise His authority as the antitype of David, until thousands of years should pass? Peter virtually says, Israel is looking for a Messiah who is to reign from an earthly throne. He is to reign, but from the throne in heaven, whither He went when He was raised from the dead and ascended on high. Do not reject Him as though He were not a king. He is a king, and is now ruling from the throne promised to His father David.

In Acts 5: 29-31, Peter, in a similar way, associates our Lord's resurrection with His exaltation to regal authority: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree, him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." This rule, as a prince, is doubtless that which he had already spoken of at Pentecost, which fulfilled the

covenant promised to David, that he should not want a man to sit on his throne, and the only rule of Christ of which Peter gives any hint anywhere.

Similarly James (in Acts 15 : 15 *sq.*) interprets the prophecy of Amos (9 : 11 *sq.*), "And I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up, that the residue of men may seek after the Lord and all the Gentiles," as affording proof that the Gentiles are to share in the promises to Israel, and as already in process of fulfilment in the conversion of the Gentiles as represented by the case of Cornelius.*

Heb. 10 : 12, 13 seems absolutely conclusive that Christ's present rule is the rule He will exercise till the end. "But he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God : from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet." If this does not declare that He is to sit on the seat at the right hand of God to which He was exalted from the cross and grave, until all His enemies are vanquished, what does it mean ? His present rule will, then, continue to the end. How any can, in view of this passage, hold that our Lord must leave this very seat at God's right hand, from which "he expects till his enemies shall be made the footstool of his feet" and assume

* Dr. Gordon regards Acts 15 : 14-18 as the "programme of Redemption." He makes v. 14 refer to the gathering out of the Gentiles—the first act ; v. 16, the conversion and restoration of Israel at Christ's personal coming—the second act ; v. 17, the conversion of the world in the millennium—the third act. This is eisegesis surely.

another throne, which they assume to be His own (or David's), in distinction to this, which they say is His Father's, before His enemies can be subdued, is passing strange. Nay, more; how they can believe that the world is to grow worse and worse, and men become more and more rebellious and hardened against His rule so long as He sits on His throne at the Father's right hand, is stranger still, when it is declared that His enemies are to be made the footstool of His feet before He leaves it. Similarly conclusive is that much-abused passage (1 Cor. 15 : 23-26): "But each in his own order, Christ the firstfruits: then they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father: when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death." When it is said here "he must reign till," etc., does this mean He shall continue to reign as now, or He shall only begin to reign in the reign which shall "put all his enemies under his feet," at some distant future time? The latter meaning is impossible. When, also, is the time of the end, "when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father"? It is not to be "until he has put all his enemies under his feet." The last of these is death, and death is put beneath His feet in the resurrection. Now, what was the resurrection that Paul could have supposed vanquished death and gave the limit to our Lord's mediatorial rule, at which He surrendered it

into the hands of the Father, but the resurrection about which he was treating at length?

Now, this, as our pre-millennial friends generally hold, was the resurrection of the righteous. It is then that all enemies, even to the last of them, have been put beneath His feet. It is then that He completes His work on earth.

Instead of beginning to reign in His kingdom, when He comes and raises the righteous dead, it is then He surrenders His rule. Instead of coming to lift a sinking cause up into triumph, His enemies are all subdued when He comes to destroy the last enemy, death, in the resurrection of the righteous he is describing.

Is it too much to affirm that the pre-millennial interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies of the throne of David and the perpetual reign of his seed is dashed to pieces by the teaching of the New Testament? Christ as the Son of David has already taken up into himself all the kingly authority promised to his seed, and is already ruling on the prophetic throne of David. The rule He is now exercising from heaven is the only kind of rule He shall ever wield over the earth. Old Testament prophecy interpreted in the light of New Testament teaching gives no support to the idea of a visible reign of Christ on earth. Thus interpreted, the promises that David should never want a man to sit on his throne is fulfilled. Up to the time of our Lord's first coming, the descendants of David continued to have a kind of rule over the Jews. Since He came and ascended on high, He has been exercising a higher form of kingly

authority, adapted to the advance in spirituality of the new dispensation as compared with the old, over the antitype of Israel, and this is never to end.

Now, this being established, all things else must adjust themselves around this more spiritual conception of Christ's rule. There is no need of a national Israel for Him to govern. Nay, a rule, including all the functions of civil government, as Dr. Nicholson holds, would be inconsistent altogether with a spiritual rule over the hearts of men, such as our Lord now wields, and is to wield perpetually. So we find that the true Israelites, in the New Testament sense—those who are the children of the promise made to Abraham and his seed—are those who receive life from Christ, the seed in whom all nations should be blessed, and who have the same faith that made Abraham the object of blessing. The Jews, through their unbelief, were broken off from this believing stock (Rom. 11 : 17 *sq.*), and the believing Gentiles are grafted in and partake of all the root and fatness of the olive tree. Just as David and his natural descendants ruled over natural Israel, so there is a spiritual Israel in which "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creature," and over which our Lord sways His spiritual sceptre, and both sway and people are the only sway and people, until the end.

All this is further confirmed by the fact that there is no hint in the New Testament of a restored Jewish nation, much less of a restored Jewish nation with priests and sacrifices and supremacy. The heart of

Paul was consumed with longing for the welfare of his people, especially as he was penning the outline of their future in Romans, chaps. 9-11. Surely if the glory of a national restoration under Christ as visible king was to be theirs, mention would be made of it here. But the great hope which comforted Paul and was to comfort his fellow-countrymen who had believed, and which also exhausted the fulness of the promises and vindicated the divine faithfulness, was the preservation of a faithful remnant before Christ came, who were the real "children of the promise" which are "reckoned for a seed" (9: 6-10, 27), the preservation of a believing remnant after He had appeared (11: 1-8), and the salvation of "all Israel," after "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," through the taking away of their sins (11: 25-27). It is the reception of the Jews to the blessings of the Gospel, which are common to Jews and Gentiles alike, on the common condition of faith. They are to be grafted in as a shoot among the Gentile branches which have long been growing on the old root of promised spiritual blessings. They are to be saved in the same sense as, and in no other sense than, the fulness of the Gentiles. All Israel is to be saved because all Israel, one by one, is to believe. Both Alford and Meyer, though favoring the pre-millennial view in some things, declare that the prophetic expression, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer" (v. 26), means merely that the Redeemer should spring from Israel, and gives no hint of His coming to reign over the Jews on earth.

Neither is it so difficult to conceive why the language of Old Testament prophecy of spiritual blessing in the new dispensation should be in terms of national blessing to national Israel. Is it strange, for instance, that the rule of David's greater Son should be spoken of as still located in Jerusalem, the seat of David's line, and that its power and blessing should be represented as continuing to go forth from this place, which had for long ages been the centre of God's manifestations to Israel? Is it strange that the highest religious service and worship in the glorious and spiritual gospel era, should be in terms of the priesthood, sacrifices and feasts, which represented the highest conception that prophet or people had of them? The descriptions of the triumphs of the gospel dispensation of peace and grace, as couched in the language of victories on fields of blood, may be understood, when we remember that this is the only kind of victory for God which the Israelites knew. These prophecies were all addressed to Israelites. In any other language than that which to them most nearly represented the truth to be communicated, the prophecies would have been unintelligible.

They were yet unprepared for the conception of a spiritual rule of Christ from heaven. His reign must be represented in terms of the rule which to them was most glorious, and most like His rule which was to be. Equally unable were they to conceive of religion without priests and sacrifices. The religion of the gospel age was, therefore, represented in the terms of their own, lifted up and purified to the utmost. And so of all the rest. Even in the New

Testament—in the book of Revelation—we have the peaceful conquests of the Gospel, and the struggles of the Church, represented in some passages in the language of battle and of blood.

In confirmation of all this, as we have seen, so much of Old Testament prophecy respecting Israel, the kingdom and reign of Messiah, etc., as is explained by New Testament writers, is referred by them to the spiritual Israel of which the nation was the type, and to the present kingdom and reign of Christ on earth. Not one of these prophecies is referred by them to a natural and national Israel. Must we not, therefore, interpret the prophecies to which New Testament writers make no reference, in the one and only way they explain those they do explain? To do otherwise would be the height of presumption.

We also call special attention to another point. Many pre-millennial writers admit that, literally interpreted, Old Testament prophecy is almost, if not altogether, silent about the Church and the history of God's people in the whole gospel age, from Pentecost until the second advent. The exigencies of their theory seem to demand this position. For instance, Blackstone says, "The church came in mystery and was but rarely, if at all, spoken of in Old Testament prophecies."*

McIntosh declares: "There is not so much as a single syllable about the church of God, the body of Christ, from cover to cover of the Old Testament."†

* "Jesus is Coming," p. 59.

† "Papers on the Lord's Coming," p. 22.

Dr. Brookes : "The church as now existing, forming the mystical body and bride of Christ, was not known to the Old Testament prophets."*

For statements so positive and involving so much that is well-nigh incredible, they depend for proof chiefly upon Eph. 3 : 5-9, which merely declares that the mystery spoken of had not been so clearly made known, in the other generations, as it was now revealed to the apostles and prophets of the new dispensation.

The literal and pre-millennial interpretation, then, requires us to believe that the prophets whose visions were clear and explicit regarding our Lord's first coming, His life, death, resurrection, ascension and the pouring out of the Spirit, see nothing of the long ages which were to follow, as the Church arose and His disciples, in the power of the Spirit, sought to fulfil the parting instructions of their Lord, by preaching the Gospel to the whole creation. After this centuries long blank in prophetic vision, when only obscure hints rise up out of the dense darkness of the unrevealed ; then, away beyond the second coming of the Lord, the far horizon is all aglow with light, as seer after seer gives enraptured descriptions of a kingdom, a rule and a restored Israel, in a glory which is to be perpetual. There lies against the forcing of the literal interpretation through Old Testament prophecy, with all that it involves, the tremendous presumption against the belief that there should be

* "Maranatha," p. 438.

this great hiatus in prophecy covering all the dispensation of the Spirit—the very time, we might well suppose, that would fill to the full the prophetic vision of the future—that the second coming, in prophecy, succeeds the first with next to nothing between.

If our argument has force, and the collective body of believers is the antitype of prophetic Israel, then this extravagant assumption is without foundation. Perhaps it may be well to refer to a few more passages which support our position, and some also which are in direct conflict with this idea that prophecy did not have the present dispensation in its visions of the future. Peter writing to the elect of the dispensation, "in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," declares (1 Pet. 2: 5): "Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." He continues in v. 9: "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." Whether Peter is writing to Jewish Christians alone, or to mixed churches of Jewish and Gentile converts, the teaching is the same. Gathering up all that the Israelites had been, and still claimed to be, to God, Peter turns away from natural Israel to these scattered believers, and declares them to be the antitype of God's ancient people: "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." Ye do not possess a material temple, as did Israel, but ye consti-

tute a temple, as ye "as living stones are built up a spiritual house." Ye, as "a holy priesthood," "offer up spiritual sacrifices," of which the old offerings will be but the material type. For Peter, the Jewish "race," "nation," "priesthood," "people," "sacrifices," "temple" had their higher and antitypical realization in believers. The natural and material had issued in the spiritual. So far as we can judge from his writings, all the promises to prophetic Israel had their fulfilment in believers. Of a retrogression from the spiritual antitype to the fleshly and material type Peter seems to have known nothing.

Paul in Rom. 9: 24-27 quotes Hos. 2: 23 and 1: 10, which was spoken by the prophet concerning a restoration of Israel to favor, as covering the reception of Gentiles as well as Jews under the Gospel, to be the Lord's people. This prophecy, which referred primarily to the restoration from the captivity, Paul declares to have its antitypical fulfilment in the gospel day.

In Gal. 4: 21-31 Paul declares that two sons of Abraham, Ishmael by a handmaid, and Isaac by a free-woman, furnish an allegory. The former was born after the flesh, the latter by promise. Ishmael born of Hagar, corresponded to the old covenant from Sinai, and was represented by Jerusalem as it then was in bondage with her children; Isaac corresponded to the Jerusalem that is above and free, of whom all believers are children. In the reception of believers into the church was fulfilled, in its grandest and final sense, Isa. 54: 1, which referred directly to Israel. Hence, Paul concludes, "We brethren, as Isaac was

are children of promise." We believers are the real Israelites, the real children of promise with Isaac.

In Heb. 8: 6 *sq.*, the two covenants are compared. The first was that made with the Israelites, when God delivered them from Egypt. The second, or new covenant, is that of the new dispensation of the Gospel, as is seen in the succeeding elaboration of the author's thought. Yet this new covenant—of the gospel dispensation as explained in Hebrews—is said, in the prophecy in Jer. 31: 31-34, as quoted, to be made 'with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah' (Heb. 8: 8). The promise of a new covenant to Israel and Judah is fulfilled, under the Gospel, to all who accept Christ by faith and are regenerated. If promises made explicitly to Israel are interpreted by New Testament writers as fulfilled in the new dispensation in believers, whether of Jew or Gentile, they must have identified the Israel of these prophecies with believers.

Almost all of Hebrews is to explain how the nation and religion of Israel have their highest realization in Christ and Christianity. The author gives us not the remotest hint that there was any promise or covenant to Israel which was to be fulfilled in any other way than in their partaking of the common salvation, and sharing in its blessings, which are for all alike. His whole argument goes to show that all the prophetic promises to Israel, so far as he knew them, were to be fulfilled in this way, and in this way only.

Again in Rom. 10: 18-21 Paul quotes prophecies

which he interprets as fulfilled in the conversion of the Gentiles which was then in progress, and in Rom. 15: 9-13 he refers the reader to several others which he interprets as being fulfilled in the same way. It is especially noticeable that he quotes the theocratic passage, "There shall be the root of Jesse, and he that ariseth to rule over the Gentiles, on him shall the Gentiles hope" (v. 12), where the Messiah is referred to in His kingly dignity, and in the exercise of His royal rule as a prophetic description of the spiritual subjection of the Gentiles to Christ through their conversion, and having no reference to a future personal rule of our Lord on earth.

In this connection we refer again to Rom. 11: 25-32, but especially to vs. 25-29: "For I would not have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in: and so, all Israel shall be saved, as it is written: There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer: he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sin."

Just as certainly as Paul in the passages before referred to interprets the prophets as foretelling the conversion of the Gentiles, and their reception into the Church, so in this passage just as surely does he interpret another prophecy as declaring the conversion of the Jews, and their gathering into the Church. Sanday, the last and one of the best commentators on Romans, explains v. 26: "So the words of Paul mean simply that the people of Israel as a nation, and no

longer in part, shall be united with the Christian Church." Alford: "I have not mixed with the consideration of this prophecy the question of the restoration of the Jews to Palestine, as being clearly irrelevant to it: the matter here treated being their *reception into the Church of God.*" So, substantially, Godet, Meyer, Moule, Philippi, "Biblical Commentary," etc.

We cannot do better than quote from Meyer's note on this passage, concurred in by Philippi. As these both sympathize with some phases of the pre-millennial view, the testimony has all the more force.

He says: "Observe further how the present passage is in diametrical opposition to the opinion now received in many quarters of an actual restoration of Israel to its theocratic royalty in Canaan. Israel does not take in the church, but the church takes in Israel, and whenever this takes place, Israel has its royalty and its Canaan in the true sense."

Paul gives us in this eleventh chapter of Romans his furthest and final word as to Israel's earthly destiny. It is its salvation from sin, and its reception, as a whole, among the Lord's people, which have been gathered into the Church from Gentiles and from Jews "in part." All this is to be completed before our Lord's second coming. "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer" refers to his first coming, as Alford suggests. "'Out of Zion' summed up the prophecies which declare that the Redeemer *should spring out of Israel.*" As Meyer well says, at His

second coming Christ comes as judge, not as deliverer. All Paul seems to see, as the fulfilment of prophecy in case of Israel, was, therefore, Israel's conversion before the second coming of Christ. Can we think him less fully acquainted with the prophecies which Premillennialists believe assure a national life in Canaan to Israel, then are they; or was he less fitted to interpret them correctly? Can we believe that here, if he gave the pre-millennial interpretation to any of them, and he really saw that as a nation they were to be raised to supreme glory, he would have been silent, where he seems to give his last word as to their earthly history? Nay, it is much more rational to believe that he interpreted the glowing prophecies as to Israel's future, as Meyer says he did, according to analogy with his identification of believers with the true sons of Abraham, and that "where the church takes in Israel, Israel has its royalty and its Canaan in its true sense."

Other passages might be adduced to prove that Old Testament prophecies respecting Israel, as interpreted by New Testament writers, are fulfilled in the gospel day in believers whether Jewish or Gentile, and, also, that in some of them, as thus interpreted, direct reference is made to the gospel age, its progress, and its final triumphant consummation. The following will repay study. 1 Pet. 1: 10-12; 2 Cor. 6: 14-18; Col. 2: 16 sq., etc. We shall not pursue the subject further. We call the reader's attention again to a very significant fact. The New Testament writers

interpret no Old Testament prophecy to which they allude as remaining to be fulfilled after our Lord is to come again, or under any other than the present gospel conditions. Had they regarded the great mass of Old Testament prophecy respecting the future glories of the Messiah's kingdom as to be fulfilled only after His second advent, and under conditions vastly different, would they have abstained so absolutely from all reference to them and interpretation of them? Those who hold they did both so believe and so abstain, ought, at least, to favor us with some rational explanation of so strange a silence.

A final point needs to be noticed in this discussion of the nature of the kingdom. Our Lord speaks of the Church but twice: Matt. 16:18: "Upon this rock will I build my church," and Matt. 18:17: "Tell it unto the church," etc. In Matthew alone He speaks of the kingdom nearly fifty times, and upon that His thoughts seem fixed. This was not only the subject of the preaching of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1), but also of our Lord from the beginning to the end of His public ministry (Matt. 4:17; 9:35, etc.). It was the kingdom He commissioned the twelve to preach (Matt. 10:7), and also the seventy (Luke 10:11). It was the Gospel of the kingdom He foresaw was to be preached among all the nations (Matt. 24:14). It was about the kingdom that His chief teachings were gathered.

Thus it was with the Sermon on the Mount, as generally interpreted, the prayer He taught His

disciples, the most of His parables (see Matt. 13), and a large part of the balance of His instructions.

Now, if the kingdom is not to be established until after the second coming, as our pre-millennial friends declare, we are compelled to believe that all the preaching of John, of our Lord, of the twelve, of the seventy, the principles laid down in the Sermon on the Mount, all the teaching of the most of the parables—the great body of the teaching and preaching of our Lord and His disciples—had little direct and prominent reference to all the ages which were to crowd each other between His ascension and His second coming. They all had direct and chief reference to a period in the dim distance, beyond centuries on centuries of permeating principles and deepening conflicts. Does it seem probable that our Lord, speaking to His disciples whom He was about to send forth to disciple all the nations, gave almost exclusive attention, in His own preaching and teaching, to a kingdom which was not to exist until all the work He was thus to commission them to do had been done? Why should He take such pains to speak to the men of His own generation of a kingdom which was not to appear until ages on ages after they were to be in their graves? In speaking to those who were living with Him He would surely refer chiefly to what was immediately impending or already present, so far as the earthly life of His people was concerned. Our pre-millennial friends may well be asked to explain how our Lord could have such scant thought for the

period just at hand, and which was to impose such tremendous burdens and responsibilities upon those to whom He spoke ?

We have thus endeavored to consider, with care and candor, the evidence from the New Testament, and from the Old Testament in the light of the New, as to the kingdom and reign of Christ. It has been profitable to ourselves; we hope the result may be of some service to the reader.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EVER-IMMINENT COMING OF OUR LORD.

PRE-MILLENNIALISTS hold it to be the teaching of the New Testament that our Lord's second and personal advent might occur at any time subsequent to His ascension. In view of the possibility of His immediate return, all are commanded to watch, lest His coming take them by surprise and unprepared. If at least one thousand years must intervene before this coming of the Lord, as the post-millennial view demands, it is said this great event could not be represented as possibly so near, or that men must thus ever be on the watch lest it overtake them as a thief in the night. As Blackstone tersely puts it: "Now it is absolutely inconsistent with the construction of the human mind thus to watch for an event which we believe to be one thousand years or more in the future." *

This argument, at first sight, appears more than plausible. Were all the facts involved taken into account in this statement it would be conclusive. When these facts are weighed, however, we believe it

* "Jesus is Coming," p. 438.

oe found to be exposed to objections, and to be sed upon a misconception.

Let us examine the facts of the New Testament teaching from the pre-millennial standpoint, that almost all the references to the coming of the Lord are to His second and personal advent.

There are passages which seem to teach that the time of His coming is left perfectly indefinite. The "day and hour" is known only by the Father (Matt 24:36). Others know no more about the time than does the householder when the thief will come. His coming will be when even His people think not, so that the only safety against surprise is to be always ready (Matt. 24: 42-44). It is equally uncertain whether He will come "at even or at midnight, or at cockerowing, or in the morning" (Mark 13: 35), whether in the second watch or in the third (Luke 12:38). The coming may be at the beginning of the period of possible expectation, it may be at its close, it may be at any time, it is altogether uncertain; the only safety, therefore, is in perpetual watchfulness.

On the other hand, there are other passages which just as clearly declare that the coming of the Lord is nigh, and at hand. "The Lord is at hand," says Paul (Phil. 4: 5).*

"For yet a very little while, he that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry," says the author of Hebrews (chap. 10: 37). "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." "The coming

* Many interpreters regard this passage as referring to Christ's ordinary presence with His people.

of the Lord is at hand," and "the Judge standeth before the doors," says James (5 : 7-9). "The end of all things is at hand," says Peter (1 Pet. 4 : 7). "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come," said our Lord (Matt. 10 : 23) in giving specific instructions to His apostles concerning what work they should attempt, and which must be fulfilled during their life-time. In harmony with this He adds, "Verily I say unto you, there be some of them that stand here which shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom" (Matt. 16 : 28), which some Pre-millennialists would make refer to His transfiguration six days after, apparently not noticing that only "some of them" to whom He was speaking were to live until they saw Him coming in His kingdom, and not all of them, as was true when He was transfigured. Besides, His transfiguration was only witnessed by three of His disciples, while He intimates that all who were then alive should see Him coming in His kingdom. Finally, our Lord commissions John to say to the Church in Philadelphia, "I come quickly" (Rev. 3 : 11), and His last word in Rev. 22 : 20 is "Yea I come quickly."

Nor is this all. The ignorance of our Lord of the future which is implied in the belief that He himself thought He might come in person immediately after His ascension is utterly at variance with all our ideas of His knowledge, and with what we are led to expect from scripture teaching. That He did not know the day and hour of His return by no means makes it neces-

sary for us to suppose that He knew nothing of the future of the world's history, which His teaching as to the possible imminence of His personal coming from the first would compel us to accept. He and scripture writers did know that His coming was to be associated with the resurrection of the dead, the judgment, and the end of the world. If they thought that He might come at any moment, then they must have been in utter ignorance of anything in the history of the world and the nations, which was to happen after His ascension and before the end. But they must have been aware that there were prophecies of cities and countries yet unfulfilled, or must have believed that the events in reference to them might all be rushed through in almost no time, or that all referred to what was to happen after the end of the age. Of all the history of the Church, as the work of our Lord on earth was to advance to its realization through conflicts and varying experiences as ages and ages went by, can we believe they knew so little that they thought it might all happen in a few months, or, at most, years? Indeed, this supposition that our Lord and scripture writers thought that the second personal advent and the end of the world might happen at any moment after the ascension, requires us to believe that all the time between, packed full, as has been proved, of the grandest history since the world began, was an absolute blank to them, so far as events demanding time to happen are concerned. When we remember that the prophets of old had such sure visions of the future, we can scarcely think that those

who had the highest position and the clearest light of revelation of the new dispensation—much less can we think that our Lord himself, even while in His state of humiliation—knew nothing of what was to happen on earth until His second coming. Interpreters generally, including Pre-millennialists, see in Old Testament prophecy, especially in Daniel, an outline of history stretching for centuries beyond our Lord's life on earth. Take the seventh chapter of Daniel, for instance. The last of the four beasts, by common consent, represents the Roman Empire. Up to the end of the apostolic age Rome was in the height of her power. This empire was to fall to ruins; ten kings were to rise from these ruins; after them another was to come forth, and he was to "wear out the saints of the Most High . . . until a time and times and half a time" (vs. 23-26). Could not our Lord also interpret prophecy? He did interpret it so far as it reached down to His day. Did He not know that the completion of unfulfilled parts of these very prophecies required long stretches of time?

But we need not argue in this *a priori* way. Our Lord and the New Testament writers did know that events were to intervene between their time and the second personal advent which made His return at any moment impossible: because these events could not happen in the twinkling of an eye, and must run on far beyond the life of that generation. They knew that Jerusalem was to be destroyed and to remain "trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21: 24). They knew that

the long series of events outlined in Matt. 24 must be completed. Neither can we believe that our Lord was so entirely ignorant of His own prophecies as not to know that they would reach on ages beyond His time. The Gospel of the kingdom was to be preached in the whole world before the end (Matt. 24: 14). The followers of Christ were to "make disciples of all the nations," as He was to be with them alway, "even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28: 19, 20) through the presence of the Spirit. They knew that the Israelites generally must first repent before our Lord would be sent from heaven (Acts. 3: 19-21). They knew also that Israel would not repent "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11: 25). They knew that the "man of sin" must arise and run his course until iniquity reaches its culmination before it is "brought to nought by the manifestation of his coming" (2 Thess. 2: 1-12). They knew that the kingdom of heaven, then like a mustard seed, in its small beginning, was to grow until it became in comparison, like a great tree (Matt. 13: 31, 32). Like the leaven in the meal, the kingdom of heaven in the world was to go on doing its work until all the world was permeated by its teachings and power (Matt. 13: 33). John also, in Revelation, sees a long succession of tremendous events which were to take place before the end.

In view of all this, can we believe our Lord and New Testament writers really thought the second personal advent might be immediately impending? Here is also something which is "absolutely incon-

sistent with the constitution of the human mind"—in view of these events which they knew must happen before He could come, which they knew must cover long stretches of years, if not centuries—still to believe He might come at any moment, and be watching for His coming before the events had happened which they knew must precede His coming.

But both our Lord and Paul make it evident that they did not wish the early believers to think the second personal advent was possibly at hand. When His disciples came to our Lord privately, saying, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24: 3), our Lord, evidently foreseeing how liable they would be to be led away by a false hope of His immediate return, warns them against it. "Take heed that no man lead you astray. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ: and shall lead many astray. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for these things must needs come to pass: but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation. . . . But all these things are the beginning of travail. . . . And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. . . . And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations: and then shall the end come" (vs. 4-14). In this discourse, instead of representing His coming as indefinitely near, our Lord, by interjecting this long series of events, taught them in the most explicit way that it was indefinitely distant.

Paul, also, about thirty years after our Lord's ascension, gives a similar warning to the Thessalonians, who thought the day of the Lord was present. "Let no man beguile you, in any wise," he says, "for it will not be except the falling away be first, and the man of sin be revealed," etc. (2 Thess. 2:1-12). Now, whether this "man of sin" be the Romish system or some evil personage of tremendous power, Paul really referred to what has at least not yet been completely fulfilled. Are we to believe he knew so little of the time required for the rise and culmination of this evil power, as to think it possible for it all to take place so quickly that the Thessalonians might still expect the Lord's return at any moment? Did he know so certainly the future facts and the order of their occurrence, and know nothing of the time it would take for them to run their course? Paul surely could not have meant to encourage any to interpret his words in this way. They seem to have been occasioned by this very misconception, and to have been written to remove it.

Peter also knew he was to grow old and die, as, doubtless, did all the disciples, from our Lord's words, "But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not," as is evident from John's inspired comments: "Now, this he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God" (John 21:18, 19; comp. 2 Pet. 1:12-15). John is careful to disabuse the minds of the people of the false notion that our Lord's words, "If I will that he tarry

till I come," implied that he would be relieved from death by the second advent (John 21: 22, 23).

Thus, we find the time of the coming of the Lord represented as altogether uncertain and indefinite. In other passages it is definitely spoken of as near. At the same time our Lord and the writers of the New Testament have knowledge of events and series of events to happen before His coming, which they must have been aware would take long stretches of years to accomplish. On the pre-millennial assumption that all these references to our Lord's coming are to His personal second advent, the first and second forms of representation seem utterly irreconcilable. If the time of the second coming is altogether indefinite, so that it may not happen for ages, how could it be spoken of with such unqualified assurance as near at hand? The knowledge of events requiring a great length of time to happen before His advent, seems equally inconsistent with either its possible or its certain nearness. The problem presented is not easy in any case; from the pre-millennial point of view it is insoluble.

Rationalistic interpreters, of whom Germany supplies the greatest number, have what they deem an easy solution. They believe it to be the teaching of the New Testament, not that our Lord might, but that He would immediately return, and, consequently, that apostles and people expected Him to appear before the day of their death. The second class of passages we have referred to, as well as those like Jas. 5: 7; Rev. 2: 25; Luke 19: 13; 1 Thess. 5: 23; Phil. 1: 9, 10; 1 Thess. 4: 17, etc., they would explain on

this ground. It is also to be remembered that these are the interpreters our pre-millennial brethren often quote as lending such authority to their view. But this interpretation does not help, in the least, to harmonize the second class of passages with the first noticed, or to explain how they could think our Lord was immediately to appear, when there was no sign of the fulfilment of many of the predictions which they knew must come to pass before He was to come. It also involves us in a more serious difficulty. Our Lord and New Testament writers, they hold, teach that the second advent is to be in the lifetime of the generation then living. But He did not then come in the sense they declare He was to appear. They were, therefore, false prophets. If they were in error in reference to this prediction, we have no assurance they were not in reference to all they made. If their inspiration did not save them from error in their teaching about the future, can we be sure that it kept them from error in their doctrinal teaching? And thus our whole confidence in them as infallible teachers is in danger of shipwreck. This does not trouble this class of interpreters; nay, they urge this instance of what they deem false prophecy as a proof that the traditional doctrine of inspiration is false, and must be modified or abandoned. But our pre-millennial brethren, who are staunch believers in the infallibility of the scripture writings, cannot afford to accept these interpreters, or this interpretation, as authoritative, when leading to a conclusion they so strongly deprecate.

Others think they find help in the thought of the progressive nature of revelation. We believe aid is to be found here, but not a complete solution. In the progress of revelation the antitype may succeed the type, the fuller the more obscure statement; the more spiritual the more material form of truth, and new truth may be made known. But in what pertains to a matter of fact, no progress in revelation can set aside a previous prophecy and not prove it false. The time of the coming might not be revealed in the earlier revelation, and be made known in a later one; or the fact might be stated in the earlier and the time left indefinite, and the definite time revealed in the later. But if one time is stated in the earlier, and another in the later, the later proves the earlier false, if itself be true.

If, at any stage of revelation, it is taught that the personal coming of the Lord is near, and it was really far distant, no progress of revelation can help us but a progress out of the false into the true. Again, even though the time of our Lord's coming were represented in the earlier as altogether indefinite, and in the later as certainly near, or *vice versa*, we get no help. In the former case the progress of revelation has ended in what has been proved untrue, in the latter case, it began in what was of this character. But really such progress in either direction can scarcely be made out in the New Testament writings. In any case, the insuperable difficulty presented by the fact that our Lord and New Testament writers knew that events covering long stretches of years

must intervene before the second personal advent, would remain untouched. Pre-millennialists believe that the time of our Lord's second personal coming is purposely left indefinite, in order that all men in all ages may have the inspiration of the thought that His second advent may possibly be imminent.

Dr. Gordon declares,* "Nothing can be plainer to the unprejudiced reader of the New Testament than that it is the purpose of the ascended Bridegroom to

* In addition to the quotation from Dr. Gordon, I add the following from other prominent Pre-millennialists in support of my statement :

"It has pleased God to give signs or evidences of the approach of these events, and by which we might know that the day was drawing near (Heb. 10 : 25), but, as we have before said, they have been of such a character that the Church could see them repeated in each generation. And this, we believe, was purposely designed, in order to give the Church *no date* and *no sign* which might so definitely indicate the time of her rapture, that we should, in any interval, cease to be vigilant. It was evidently all planned, so that the unfolding of events should be, to her, a constant incentive to watchfulness."—Blackstone : "Jesus is Coming," pp. 148-9.

"The imminence of the Lord's coming consists in two things : its certainty as a revealed fact, and its uncertainty as to time. The Lord is coming, but as to the time of that day and of that hour knoweth no man, not the angels in heaven, but my Father only. It constitutes, therefore, an overhanging, imminent event always liable to occur. The object of such imminence is that we may be perpetually looking for and waiting for the coming of the Lord."—Dr. Pierson : "The Coming of the Lord," p. 53.

"It did not please Him to reveal the time of His Son's return from heaven, even to the angels, much less to men, because this would have deprived the doctrine of all power except with those living at the very close of the present dispensation"—Dr. Brookes : "Maranatha," p. 353.

"We one and all cannot do better in this matter than stand firm on the vows of one of the great historical confessions. As Christ would have us certainly persuaded there shall be a day of judgment, so will He have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not what hour the Lord will come."—Kellogg : "Pre-millennial Essays," p. 49.

have His bride constantly, soberly and busily awaiting for His return, until the appointed time of His detention in the heavens shall have expired. Hence (quoting with approval from Archer Butler) He has harmonized with consummate skill every part of His revelation to produce this general result; now speaking as if a few seasons more were to herald the new earth, now as if His days were thousands of years; at one moment whispering into the ear of His disciples, at another retreating into the depth of infinite ages. It is His purpose thus to live in our faith and hope, remote yet near, pledged to no moment, possible at any; worshipped not with the consternation of a near, or the indifference of a distant certainty, but with the anxious vigilance that awaits a contingency ever at hand. Thus the deep devotion of watchfulness, humility and awe, He who knows us best knows to be the fittest posture of our spirits; therefore does He preserve the salutary suspense that insures it, and therefore will He determine His advent at no definite day in the calendar of eternity."*

This quotation, expresses in the most beautiful and the least objectionable form, the well-nigh universal interpretation of the facts of the teaching of the New Testament on the time of our Lord's coming, adopted by Pre-millennialists. But grave objections of various kinds lie against this view. It fails to account for all the facts. While it recognizes all the passages

* "Ecce Venit," p. 14 sq.

in which the time of the coming is left altogether indefinite and uncertain, it does not explain those in which the coming is positively declared to be at hand, unless on the assumption that our Lord was justified in declaring it to be at hand for moral effect, although He was not sure it was near, and although, as has been proved, it was not near. So, also, it does not help us to reconcile the knowledge possessed by our Lord and New Testament writers of the long future which must intervene between His personal coming, with their declarations of its possible as well as its actual nearness, unless, again, they purposely gave men the impression that the coming might be, or was near, to present a motive for faithfulness.

If we understand the matter, this is just what Premillennialists do believe. The language just quoted—when stripped of the glamor of its beauty—means nothing less than this. They do not contend that our Lord and the New Testament writers were so ignorant of prophecy and of the future, that they did not know events must happen before the Lord's second coming, which would push it forward for a long term of years. It is not a question of their knowledge so much as of what will be "the fittest posture of our spirits." It is because "the deep devotion of watchfulness, humility and awe" are known by our Lord to be the most helpful attitude of our spirits, that our Lord, therefore, preserves the salutary suspense that insures it, and, therefore, will He determine His advent at no definite day in the calendar of eternity. It is for this reason that "at one moment

He whispers into the ear of His disciple, at another retreats into the depth of infinite ages."

Stripped of all unnecessary verbiage, and expressed in the plainest way, this means that our Lord, although knowing His personal coming could not be until long after the men of His own generation were dead, nevertheless spoke to them and inspired others to speak to them, so as to lead them to suppose His advent might occur before their death; and, again, as if it certainly was nigh at hand. His reason for this was in order that this salutary attitude of watchfulness might be maintained, not only in the men of the first generation, but also in those of all generations, until He really should come. Some of the best of men, it is true, have held this view; but it appears to us they could not have had in mind all the facts of the case, or they could not have sufficiently considered the necessary implications of their theory. Can we on this ground possibly escape the shocking conclusion that our Lord encouraged the men of His own generation, at least, to hope for what He knew would prove an illusion, in order to promote their faithfulness? If we can believe this of our Lord, can we longer express abhorrence of the Jesuit rule of action, that the end justifies the means? Even if it be said that our Lord was so ignorant of the future that He really thought He might come before the death of some of the men of that generation: the Father knew, and we must suppose He would plan to make a hope which He knew would be an illusion to the people of scores and perhaps hundreds of genera-

tions, the grand motive of Christian faithfulness. Do we not thus impugn His truthfulness, when we suppose He would arrange to delude myriads and myriads with a hope He knew must prove false? Do we not thus impugn His all-sufficiency by implying that His resources are so limited that He will choose to depend for what Pre-millennialists believe the one great motive power to Christian faithfulness and activity, upon an expectation which, for nearly two thousand years of living and dying generations would never be realized? Neither is this all: we must suppose all things to be so adjusted that the supreme motive to faithfulness would be conditioned upon ignorance rather than knowledge. To have an understanding of the prophecies which had to be filled before our Lord would come, would be to make it impossible to be under the dominance of this standing and grandest motive for all the Christian ages. For the contemporaries of our Lord, for instance, to know that Jerusalem must be destroyed, must be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, that the Jews must repent before our Lord could break through the heavens which shut Him from their sight, and that they would not repent and be saved until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in—to know all this and more which is declared in the New Testament, not to mention the prophecies of the Old Testament—would remove not only the men of the first Christian age from the power of this grand motive, but those of all others until this day. Only those could feel its power, who

either shut their eyes to these prophecies, or who could not perform the feat of expecting the Lord's coming as possible before the evening of each day, while they knew many of these events to be fulfilled before He could come—events which, by their very nature, must occupy great lengths of years—gave no sign of occurring.

Reply is made to this objection, however. It is said there is no inconsistency in God's using the uncertainty as to the time of our death to promote watchfulness and faithfulness, although He may know that years are to elapse before the dying day. Why, then, it is urged, need we deem it out of harmony with God's veracity, if He use the uncertainty as to the time of the Lord's coming for the same purpose? The difficulty, it is said, is no greater in one case than in the other.

But the cases are not parallel. The time of a man's death is necessarily uncertain. It would require a special revelation in each man's case to make it known, involving continuous miracle. It is alleged that the time of Christ's coming is purposely left or made uncertain, in order that what was known would prove an illusion might be used for moral stimulus. The length of human life is also so brief that death is not only possible but really near to all.

It does not require us to think as possibly near an event which would happen only after scores and perhaps hundreds of generations had come and gone. In the one case, God uses for moral stimulus an event which is necessarily uncertain, and which is near and

to happen in the lifetime of **all**. In the other, He purposely makes to appear uncertain, when a word could have made it known to all men, an event which He knew would not happen for long ages, in order that He might use the illusory impression thus given of its possible nearness for moral effect. The difference between the two cases is one of nature as well as one of degree.

It would appear, therefore, that the pre-millennial interpretation of the various forms in which the coming of the Lord is referred to in the New Testament, involves difficulties, at almost every step, which are simply insuperable. To maintain that all the references to our Lord's coming are to His personal appearing, and that all the expressions which exhort to watchfulness, fidelity, etc., in view of His coming, are conditioned upon the possible imminence of His personal coming, is to make it impossible either to prevent different passages from contradicting each other, or to interpret them in harmony with the veracity of God. No attempt has been made to create needless difficulty, only an honest effort to make manifest the real difficulties which invest this whole subject, on pre-millennial assumptions, when we come to give to the Scriptures which relate to it anything like a searching examination.

Recently a class of Pre-millennialists have become convinced of the utter impossibility of continuing to believe that our Lord may come at any moment, while they acknowledge it to be the teaching of Scripture that He cannot come before the Jews are converted,

the Gospel preached in all nations, the man of sin revealed, and while a number of other prophecies remain to be fulfilled. Much less, they feel, could these two positions have been intelligently held together from the beginning of the Christian era. They see this would mean that He might come before He could come, and is a direct contradiction in terms. The wonder is that any could believe our Lord would not return, for instance, until the Jews were converted, and still could expect Christ might come while the Jews remain impenitent. But many, even to-day, hold these incompatible beliefs.

The new theory to meet this difficulty, and still save the pre-millennial view, is the following :

Our Lord is to come for His people, in the air. The righteous dead and the living who are His, are to be caught up, in their resurrection bodies, to meet Him there. He does not then descend to the earth, but remains with them in the air, or, as some say, returns with them to heaven. During this time, they receive their judgment. In the meantime, on the earth, there is the great tribulation, during which Israel will be restored to his own land and converted ; antichrist will be revealed ; the vials of God's wrath will be poured out ; and then our Lord will come with His people, to judge the nations and to begin His millennial reign. Those who hold this theory say that Christ may come for His people, which they term the " Rapture of the saints," at any moment ; it is only His coming with His people, which they call the

"Revelation," which cannot occur until certain prophecies are fulfilled.

The quiet assurance with which this new theory is put forward, is simply astounding, in view of all it involves, and of the evidence urged in its favor.

Notice something of what is involved in it :

There are to be two personal comings of our Lord, separated by a period of years pregnant with the grandest events. Not only will there be two resurrections, one of the righteous and another of the wicked, with those who live during the millennium to be accounted for, which the general pre-millennial view makes necessary ; but there will be three resurrections or more. The righteous dead generally rise in the "rapture," at His first second coming for His people. The tribulation saints who die between the first and the second second coming, rise when He comes this second time with His saints. To correspond with this, we suppose there must be three judgments, if these tribulation saints are not made exceptions, and have no judgment ; and still no provision is made for those who live during the millennium. "The day of judgment" is made to stretch, not only from the beginning of the millennium to beyond its close, but begins quite a time before the thousand years. The last day, also, since it is made to include the resurrection of the righteous at its beginning (John 6 : 39, 40, 44 ; 11 : 24), and the judgment of the wicked at its close (John 12 : 48), must extend over the same great length of years. Now, all Pre millennialists regard the age to come as the millennial period, as distinguished

from the ages to come (Eph. 2 : 7), and the last day they believe with us to be the last day of the present gospel age or dispensation. While the general pre-millennial theory thus extends the last day of this age so as to include the whole age to come, this special view makes the last day of this age so long that it not only covers all the age which is to follow, but also takes in a considerable portion of the closing part of the present age.

They assume, surely, that the scripture writers had a strange sense of propriety in the use of language, when they use the term last day of one age, apparently, in order to mark, sharply, the division line between this age and the next and to contrast a short with a long period, as actually including the period represented by the term describing the unspeakably longer time, with considerable to spare. They also would have us believe, that while the New Testament writers thought the last day of this age was so immense, they believe the age itself, of which this was to be the last day, might be less than the lifetime of their own generation. Rather a strange conception of the relative lengths of an age and its last day, one would think !

But what are the scripture evidences upon which dependence is placed, to establish this theory of two second comings of our Lord ? Let us examine them as given by W. E. Blackstone in his book, "Jesus is Coming," which is commended in over three pages of enthusiastic testimonials from Pre-millennialists, and whose chart of events was publicly endorsed by

the chairman of one of their conferences as representing the views of that body. It is significant that, of this view, the reverent students of the Bible for eighteen centuries found nothing. It is a discovery, so far as we can learn, of some brethren in this generation. It is also noticeable, that it was discovered to meet what seemed an insuperable difficulty in the aspect of the pre-millennial view, which is regarded by its supporters as giving to it its chief, if not its whole, importance. This may not necessarily be an objection to the view itself; for difficulties often lead to new views made necessary for their solution.

It does, however, suggest the need of the greatest caution, and makes it imperative to have very clear evidence before we accept the theory which is so opportunely discovered to relieve a cherished belief of one of its greatest difficulties.

Mr. Blackstone says: "The *rapture* occurs when the church is caught up to meet Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4: 15-17) before the tribulation: and the *revelation* occurs when Christ comes, with His saints, to end the tribulation by the execution of righteous judgment upon the earth (2 Thess. 1: 7-10; Jude 14, 15). At the rapture, Christ comes for His saints (John 14: 3). At the revelation, He comes with them (1 Thess. 3: 13; Jude 14; Zech. 14: 5)."

Of course, the reader will see that there is not a particle of proof in all these passages, allowing them all to refer to Christ's second and personal coming, that a period including the great tribulation comes between the assumed comings for, and with, His

people. If they were caught up to meet Him, and accompanied Him immediately to the earth, every demand for honest interpretation would be met.

But now for Mr. B's argument.

"He certainly must come for them before He can come with them. The assurance that God will bring them (Greek: lead them forth) with Jesus (1 Thess. 4: 14) is evidence that He will first come for them, they being caught up to meet Him in the air (v. 17). The Greek now here rendered 'to meet' signified a *going forth in order to return with*. The same now is used in Acts 28: 15, where the brethren came out to meet Paul, and had a season of thanksgiving with him at Appii Forum and the Three Taverns, when on his way to Rome. This exactly accords with our being caught up to meet Christ and afterwards returning to the earth with Him."

Two arguments, if we may call them such, are here given. The first is mere words. Christ must come for, before He can come with, His people. This only means that they must meet Him before they can accompany Him to the earth. But what strength has it to show that the calling of them up to meet Him and their descent with Him are two distinct occurrences, involving two separate comings of our Lord? His second argument, from the parallel case of the use of the word *απαντεσις*, *to meet*, is most unfortunate for him; because those who met Paul, met him on his journey to Rome and immediately accompanied him back. Who would argue from the use of this word that the one met was required to stop a long

time before continuing his journey, or to go back whence he came, and return with them only after an indefinite period? The fact is that in the other instances of the use of this expression (*εις απαντες*) in the New Testament (Matt. 25 : 1-6; Acts 28 : 15), it is to meet and immediately to return with the one met, as he continues on to his destination.

But let us examine the passages depended upon a little more closely. We are asked to believe that our Lord's coming, referred to in 1 Thess. 4 : 14, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him," is subsequent, by an indefinite and fateful period, to the coming Paul immediately proceeds to speak of in vs. 15-17 : "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord," etc. The former is the revelation, which is not to take place until long after the latter, which is the rapture.*

But who that notices the way in which these verses are articulated together into an indivisible whole,

*It is also more than doubtful whether this verse refers at all to the return of the saints in their resurrection bodies with the Lord. The teaching seems to be that as our Lord died and rose again, so shall God bring those who are fallen asleep in Jesus with Him from the dead. Or, it may mean, that God will bring with Jesus the spirits of those who have fallen asleep (as to their bodies) when He descends to raise their bodies from the dead (comp. 2 Cor. 4 : 14). This is the interpretation of Jos. Smith, in his "The Coming King," p. 52. Mr. Smith is an ardent Pre-millennialist. The "ten thousand of his holy ones," in Jude 14, are the *angels*, not the redeemed. These two passages upon which such a doctrine depends for its direct scripture basis, when rightly interpreted, have no reference to the question at issue, and if they had, would not give it any countenance.

can believe this? Notice that Paul, in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, corrects some misapprehensions of the people, as to his former teaching. In chapter 2 : 1-9, he says : " Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him ; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is now present ; let no man beguile you in any wise : for *it will not be* except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed," etc. Paul here disabuses the minds of the Thessalonians of a false impression as to the time of our Lord's coming. He declares it impossible for Him to come for an indefinite time in the future, instead of assuming He might come at any moment, as the pre-millennial view requires, and as they interpret 1 Thess. 4 : 15-19 to mean. To Mr. Blackstone and those that follow him, this is thought to present no difficulty. It is only necessary to refer 1 Thess. 4 : 15-19 to the rapture and 2 Thess. 2 : 1-9 to the revelation. They do not seem to notice the arrant nonsense they make of Paul's reasoning. It is not " Do not be troubled : for the coming I spoke of in my first letter is not present, as you suppose. An indefinite time must elapse before that coming will be upon you." But it is made to be : " The coming I spoke to you about in my first letter may, indeed, happen at any moment ; but do not be shaken from your mind ; because there is another coming than the one I then spoke of, which is not to be present for a long time to

come." If anything is plain, unless we wish to impute folly to an inspired man, it is that Paul, in his second letter, is referring to the same coming as in the first, and that this theory of two second comings of our Lord is a figment of the imagination rather than the teaching of these passages which are supposed to give it its chief support. And yet, Mr. Blackstone takes "most commentators" to task, because they do not accept such an interpretation as this!

Another argument for the distinction between the time of the rapture and of the revelation is one of the many specimens, in his book, of curiosities of interpretation.

For the statement, "At the rapture the church, like Enoch, is taken out of the world," he gives as proof Acts 15: 14, where it is expressly declared that "God did visit the Gentiles to take out of *them* a people for his name," referring to the conversion of Cornelius and his household and the reception of the Gentiles generally to the privileges of the Gospel. It does not make the remotest allusion to Christ's coming, at some future time, to take His people from the earth. For the supplementary statement, "At the revelation, the millennial kingdom is begun," he gives Acts 15: 15, 16, wherein the reception of the Gentiles to the privileges of the Gospel, by Peter and Paul, is declared by James to fulfil a prophecy from Amos, which he quotes.

This much for the proof of the distinct comings at the so-called rapture and revelation. Now for the proof that the tribulation comes between. In Luke

21: 28, the rapture is referred to at the beginning of the tribulation, "when these things *begin* to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh" (redemption here meaning the first resurrection, the same as in Rom. 8: 23).

In Luke 21: 31 the revelation is referred to "when these things (the tribulation) have COME TO PASS and the kingdom of God draweth nigh."

But Mr. B. had just asserted, on the previous page, that the rapture comes "before the tribulation." Here he says that after the tribulation begins the rapture is only drawing nigh. How can the rapture both precede and happen during the course of the tribulation? Besides, he should have read the preceding verse (27), "And then (at the close of the tribulation) shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud," etc. It is manifestly in view of this coming at the close of the tribulation, and not of an imaginary one at its beginning, that our Lord told them to "look up . . . for their redemption was drawing nigh." A small knowledge of Greek would prevent anyone from building an argument upon the word "begin" as given in the translation of this passage. The more accurate translation of Luke 21: 31, "coming to pass," has left no semblance of an argument such as Mr. B. has given. But why waste space? Our Lord, in vs. 29-32, is but illustrating by a figure the time of the coming He has been speaking of in the preceding verses. These things there spoken of should be related to His coming, just as the putting forth of the shoots on the fig trees was to the summer. To

make the direct statements of our Lord in vs. 24-28 refer to another coming than the one which is spoken of in the figurative allusion to this same coming, is, of course, out of the question.

He also urges as an argument for the rapture as distinct from the revelation, that the Church is to escape the tribulation which precedes the revelation. Two passages are given in proof—Luke 21: 36; Rev. 3: 10. Luke 21: 36 reads, in the Revised Version: "But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." What are the "all things" which they are to strive to escape? They are certainly what is mentioned in v. 34; whether they include anything else or not, is doubtful. They are then, to watch, etc., that they might prevail to escape from having their hearts "overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life." Now, prevailing to escape from sins and the spirit of this world does not mean necessarily, or even naturally, to be taken away from the world and its temptations altogether. It is by escaping from evil in this higher way that men are able to "stand before the Son of man," in the consciousness of right, as the word implies—when He comes. So far as Rev. 3: 10 is concerned—"Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth"—it was spoken to the church at Philadelphia. That church has long ceased to exist, and its

members have long been lying in their graves. None of them were to live to the great tribulation which pre-millennial interpreters of Matt. 24 and Luke 21 make a period yet future. It must be a promise then, to this specified church, of deliverance from an hour of trial which was soon to come upon its living members. Whether this foreshadows a greater deliverance of the whole church from a future tribulation is uncertain. If it does, surely, as the deliverance to the Philadelphia church was a deliverance by helping them through and out from ($\epsilon\kappa$), rather than away from, the trials, any deliverance this foreshadows need not be through keeping the church away from, rather than through the midst of, and so out of, the coming trials.

Thus we have followed Mr. Blackstone in all his treatment so far as it is not mere assertion. A few words more on this theory may be added.

It is assumed that the revelation of our Lord is His coming with His people a long time after He comes to raise them from the dead. It is also after they have received their judgment and have their rewards apportioned to them. It is also after the "marriage of the Lamb." They are judged, and the marriage of the Lamb occurs, while they are in the air with their Lord. Let us see how all this agrees with the use of the word ($\alpha\pi\omicron\kappa\alpha\lambda\upsilon\psi\iota\varsigma$) which Pre-millennialists allege is used to describe this coming of the Lord with His people, after all these things have taken place.

"So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for

the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye be un-reproveable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 1: 7, 8).

If the revelation is not until after they have met their Lord, and the marriage of the Lamb and their judgment with the apportioning of its rewards are all past, then the eyes of the Corinthians, during their waiting, must have overlooked the very coming which our pre-millennial brethren think the chief object of expectation. They were waiting for the coming which was more distinct, and not the one which might be just at hand. Also, their being "unreproveable in the day of Jesus Christ," evidently referring to the judgment, was to be before His revelation for which they were waiting, and not at the revelation, as the apostle declares.

"That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth, though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1: 7).

Did Peter mean that their faith was not to be found, "unto praise" until after the first coming, when they were to be judged and their rewards assigned?

"Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, . . . set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1: 13).

Did Peter think the bestowment of this grace would be deferred until long after they were raised from the dead and had met their Lord in personal presence?

"To you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven," etc. (2 Thess. 1:7).

Were the Thessalonian believers not to have rest with their Lord when He should come to raise them from the dead and take them to himself? They really are not said to have rest, if the revelation is a later coming, even at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Besides, all these passages are taken as proof that Paul and Peter thought the coming of the Lord so near that those they addressed would probably live to see it. And yet we are to believe a word is used to describe it, which refers to another coming altogether, which was not to happen until after a terrific time of tribulation, and after the coming which really might be near, was past!

So of the other noun most frequently used to describe the second coming. This word (*παρουσία*) means "a being beside" or "presence." Now, we should expect this word "presence" or "being beside one, or where one is," would certainly not be used of a coming which is merely a nearer approach, and which stops short before He gets in sight of men at all. And yet it is this very word translated "presence," in the more accurate rendering in the margin of the Revised Version, which is used of this, as is claimed, approach of our Lord, wherein He does not come in personal presence to the earth at all.

We cannot pause to refer to other classes of passages in which this theory breaks down. We hope

this examination is sufficient to show that all alleged proof of this theory must be read in, before it can be drawn out. There is not only nothing to favor it, but it is in the most direct conflict with many passages of the Word of God. The ordinary reading of the New Testament and its more critical study alike, when there is no theory to support, find no indication that its authors had the remotest conception of two personal comings of our Lord, separated by a space between sufficient to hold all prophecy which remained to be fulfilled before His revelation with the angels of His power. A study of all the passages referring to our Lord's second personal coming makes it plain that it was to them a single, decisive, tremendous event, and not two separate ones. They speak of it always in the singular. They speak of the personal coming they refer to in every definite case as the one personal coming of which there is no other.

Certain other exigencies of this theory, which we cannot take space to explain, make it necessary that this so-called "Rapture of the saints" at Christ's coming for His people should be secret. Secret it is, therefore, held to be by the most of those adopting this special view. It is, therefore, necessary to explain away 1 Cor. 15 : 52 : "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised," and 1 Thess. 4 : 16 : "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall

rise," etc. As it is impossible to refer these passages to anything else than the coming of the Lord to raise the dead and take His people to himself, they declare the "shout," the "voice of the archangel" and the "sounding trump" are heard only by the righteous! But this is not all. Matt. 24: 27, "For, as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of man," and Acts 1: 11, "This Jesus which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven," cannot refer at all to the coming of the Lord which was first to follow His ascension; for that is to be secret and invisible, whereas this coming is in a visible blaze of glory. It cannot refer to that coming which is of chief interest to believers, as our pre-millennial brethren themselves suppose; it is of a second second coming or a third advent, when He returns after having taken His people to himself! This second coming of our Lord for His people as distinguished from His glorious coming with them, is a figment of the imagination, not a teaching of the New Testament.

Finally, the Scriptures teach it is upon the wicked the coming of the Lord is to be an awful surprise. Now, the alleged coming for the saints is said to be unknown to them, except as they wake up some morning and find all the righteous gone. It is the coming with the saints, which is placed seven years after the rapture, which is to come with its terrible unexpectedness upon this class. Not only do they hold that the time between these comings is known,

but also the definite series of events which will elapse then. And yet, in face of all this, the revelation of our Lord will surprise all the wicked! Nay, if there were such a rapture of the saints at a coming at this short period previously, it is impossible to understand how all the wicked could be thus surprised.

So far as we have gone, the problem of the teaching of Scripture as to our Lord's second coming remains unsolved. This theory would not solve it, if it could be accepted, and it cannot be accepted even though it would.

CHAPTER X.

THE EVER-IMMINENT COMING OF OUR LORD.

(Concluded.)

EVERY one who has given much study to the passages referring to the coming of the Lord will readily admit that the subject is one of great difficulty. It is much easier to criticise explanations that have been offered than to put forward one that is better. It is doubtful if any theory will ever be presented which will be perfectly satisfactory. We believe, however, that an explanation can be given which is not liable to the insuperable objections to which those we have been discussing are exposed.

We do not believe the first step can be made toward a solution of the difficulties enveloping this subject, as long as all references to the coming of the Lord are regarded as alluding indiscriminately and exclusively to His personal advent. If they all spoke of the coming as only possibly near, still there would be the impossibility of reconciling such statements with their evident knowledge of future events which must happen before His coming. But, as we have seen, there are numerous passages which speak of His

coming not only as possibly near, but as certainly near. There are also others which, if they teach anything about the nearness of our Lord's advent, and thus support the pre-millennial conception, take for granted that He will appear before those who were alive when the New Testament was written, have passed away: "We that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:15); "That thou keep the commandment . . . until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:14); "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" (Jas. 5:7); "That ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10). All these passages, if interpreted to favor Pre-millennialism at all, prove too much. They not only assume that Christ might come, but that He certainly would come, in the generation then living, and the teaching was false. The interpretation which commits us to Pre millennialism, thus inevitably leads us to a conclusion which makes the apostles fallible, and their teaching of no sure worth to prove anything.

This leads us to our first position:

1. There are "comings" of the Lord spoken of in the New Testament other than His visible and personal advent.

(1) The Lord is represented as coming in His special and more striking providential dealings with men.

Many illustrations of this usage are found in the Old Testament: "In every place when I record my name, I will come unto thee and I will bless thee"

(Ex. 20 : 24). "Ye are a stiffnecked people : if I go up into the midst of thee for one moment, I shall consume thee" (Ex. 33 : 5). "He bowed the heavens also and came down" (2 Sam. 22 : 10). "Our God shall come and shall not keep silence" (Ps. 50 : 3). "Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down" (Ps. 144 : 5). "Behold the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and cometh unto Egypt" (Isa. 19 : 1). "Behold, God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God : he will come and save you" (Isa. 35 : 4). "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down. . . . When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down" (Isa. 64 : 1-3 ; see also Ps. 80 : 2 ; Micah 1 : 3-5 ; 7 : 4 ; Mal. 4 : 6 ; Zeph. 1 : 7, etc.).

So, likewise, the pouring out of some great judgment is frequently called the coming of the day of the Lord. (Isa. 2 : 12 ; Joel 1 : 15 ; 2 : 11 ; Amos 5 : 18-20 ; Zeph. 1 : 7, etc.)

It need not surprise us, therefore, if, in the New Testament, the grander displays of the divine power in Providence, should be called the coming of the Lord, or the day of the Lord. It would rather be strange if no such allusions were found there.

We do find, in the New Testament, our Lord's providential dealings called His coming. The references to the Lord's coming in the letters to the seven churches are all acknowledged, by such a champion of Pre-millennialism as Dr. Kellogg, to be allusions to His comings in Providence. The most judicious of commentators who, in some points, agree with Pre-millennialists, also explain them the same way, *e.g.*,

Alford, Meyer. No one who studies them can reach any other conclusion. Our Lord says to the church at Ephesus: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2: 5); to the church at Pergamos: "Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth" (2: 16); to the church in Sardis: "Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (3: 3).

Now, our Lord's second and personal coming was not determined by the impenitence of these churches, as the comings here mentioned are. The judgments which are threatened constituted His coming, in each case, and these have long since fallen upon them.

(2) Our Lord is said to come to take His people to himself when they die. I know that our pre-millennial brethren regard the thought of this as almost a shocking one. They speak of death as a repulsive thing, as the "king of terrors," as something to be dreaded, even by believers. They heap all manner of contempt upon the idea that anything so loathsome as death would be called the coming of the Lord. One of the greatest joys in the thought that our Lord may immediately appear is that thus they may escape this "enemy." All the same, however, for over eighteen centuries since Christ came, believers have

all had to die. However much they may have rejoiced in the hope of being spared bodily dissolution, their hope has proved an illusion, and, perhaps, death has been all the more bitter because they had learned to look upon it as such a fearful thing. Surely this is a false view of the nature of death to the believer. Can we believe our Lord, for ages, would make no adequate provision for His people in the last solemn hour? Does all this represent correctly the teaching of the Bible, or the facts of Christian deathbeds? Death is represented as a falling asleep. Paul says that "the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law: but," he joyfully adds, "thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15: 56, 57). Even the body shall be the trophy of victory at the resurrection. Christ died "that he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2: 14, 15). Paul can desire to "depart and be with Christ," although he knows that death will meet him on the way (Phil. 1: 23). When the time comes for him to face death he can exult (2 Tim. 4: 7). In the New Testament, although death is called an enemy, he is an enemy which is overcome for us now, as he shall be *destroyed* at the resurrection. The New Testament does not give us a sombre view of death. Ample provision is made for the believer against its dread and power. This pre-millennial representation is, we

are sure, as unwholesome as it is a misconception of Bible teaching.

Whatever may be said of the other references to the Lord's coming, there is one which seems undoubtedly to be to His coming for the believer at death. We refer to John 14 : 1-4 :

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also."

Now the Father's house, with the mansions or abiding places, was in heaven, whither Jesus was going, not on earth in the millennial glory. Neither were His people to be kept waiting for hundreds and perhaps thousands of years, before they were to be received by Christ to himself, to abide with Him in these homes He was preparing for them. Paul knew that to die was to be with Christ, and so it is with all who believe on Him. They do not have to wait until the resurrection of the body to be received by our Lord unto himself. It is at death they are thus received, and are with Christ in the mansions prepared in heaven. It is at death, then, that Jesus comes for them, and this is the comfort for all His people. Those who assert that it is not at death, but at His second personal advent, will either have to show that believers are not received to the abiding places in heaven until the later coming, or that, while

received to be with Christ at death, our Lord here passes over all the time which they are with Him until then, and speaks as though they were first taken to himself at that late date.

Notice also another passage, Luke 12 : 43-46 (comp. Matt. 24 : 47-51) : "Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing Of a truth I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath. But if that servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken, the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, . . . and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful."

This parable is given in reply to Peter's question : "Lord, speakest thou this parable to us, or even unto all ?" Even if what our Lord proceeds to say referred to the apostles exclusively, it cannot be His personal coming which is spoken of ; for they have been for long centuries in glory with their Lord, and how can they be found watching at a coming which is still future ? But our Lord is evidently here speaking in a general way ; He includes the apostles, but only as they belong to the class they represent throughout the ages. But if He referred to all of this class, it is equally impossible for His personal advent to be here alluded to. For, let it be noticed, the watching and the heedlessness here spoken of are not merely in view of a coming which may or may not occur during the period of watching or carelessness. They are in

view of a coming which is certain to happen during that time. It is not "whom the Lord, if He comes, shall find," etc.; but "the Lord, *when* He comes, shall find so doing." How can the Lord, when He comes, we know not how long hence, find all the faithful of the class He refers to, still watching, when they have been with Him, many of them, for nearly two thousand years? Observe, also, it is only "if that servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming," etc.; or, on this condition, that our Lord declares He will come upon him with destruction. Now, who can hold that our Lord's personal advent is determined by the disobedience of some of His professed servants? Again, the coming here spoken of, with its destruction, is to overtake the unfaithful servant in the midst of his violence and riotousness. Does our Lord's second advent, which is still future, cut off all this class throughout the ages, in the midst of their sin? This coming, therefore, is one which takes place in the lifetime of both faithful and unfaithful, through all time. The only possible escape from this conclusion would be on an impossible assumption that our Lord is here not speaking generally so as to include the apostles and encourage them to faithfulness and warn them against unfaithfulness, by His words; but that He is alluding exclusively to a generation two thousand years or more in the future. Besides, in any case, if we refer this parable exclusively to our Lord's second coming, the reward and punishment here described would be only for those of the last generation, while it is obviously

meant to encourage and warn people in all ages. There is a coming here spoken of, then, which shall be to all earlier generations what the personal advent of our Lord shall be to the last.

Now, if this is made clear, it is further evident that the doom which the coming of the Lord brings to the unfaithful servant is His death, being "cut asunder," one form of judicial execution, and what comes after death, "appointing his place with the unfaithful," or hypocrites, as Matt. 24:51. The Lord's coming in this passage, then, seems to be His coming with His judgments at death. It is most reasonable to believe, also, that His coming to the faithful, here spoken of, is His coming at death also. It appears impossible, at least, to make this coming other than that either in providence or at death.

In this connection, three allusions to the coming of the Lord in the letters to the seven churches deserve attention. To the church in Thyatira our Lord says, "Howbeit that which ye have, hold fast till I come" (Rev. 2:25); to the church in Philadelphia, "I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (3:11); to the church in Smyrna, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (2:10). "That which ye have," "That which thou hast," refer to the faithfulness already shown in trials and temptations. This they were exhorted to maintain until the Lord came. What is the coming here spoken of? It is only a question between the coming in providence and in death. The providences which some have thought to be His coming are

the trials about to come, which should test the faithfulness they were exhorted to hold fast through them (see 2 : 23, 3 : 10). But if this be the coming of the Lord, then the exhortation must have been, "hold fast when I come in these trials," not "till I come in them." The coming, then, would seem to be when Jesus appears to deliver them from the trials, when the testing shall be over. In 3 : 11, where He says, "I come quickly," hold fast the faithfulness already shown, in the trials I have just told you are about to come, He means, "Be patient, endure the trials : you will not have to suffer them long. I come quickly to deliver you from them." Compare, also, these expressions given above. It is by holding fast their faithfulness, until the Lord comes, and comes quickly, that they are to make sure of the crown prepared (2 : 26 ; 3 : 11). It is in Rev. 2 : 10, by being faithful unto death, that they are to assume their crown. Does not this mean that the coming of the Lord is at their death, when He comes to take them from the trials, after they have given them sufficient testing? It seems hard to escape the conclusion.

(3) There is a coming of the Lord in His kingdom spoken of, which does not refer to this personal advent.

We have already referred to Matt. 16 : 28 : "Verily I say unto you, there be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." This coming was not to be till some of them had died, while it was to occur before all were dead. There should be, "some of them" alive, when He should thus come, and only some

of them. All who did live until this coming were to see it. The attempt to break the force of this passage by making the coming spoken of His transfiguration before but three of them only six days after, and while they were all still living, is worse than useless.

Doubtless Matt. 10 : 23 refers to this same coming. "But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." Now, there have actually been some who, in their zeal to refer all the comings of the Lord to His second personal advent, have argued that "the cities of Israel have not yet been " gone through.

They do not seem to have noticed that our Lord was addressing His twelve disciples in all this chapter, and that this coming should happen while these twelve were going about their work in Palestine. Compare with this Matt. 24 : 14 : "And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world (inhabited earth) for a testimony unto all the nations : and then shall the end come." The end and the coming of the Lord are acknowledged to be the same period. Now, are we to believe that the coming of the Lord, which should happen before the apostles had gone through the cities of Israel, and the coming that was not to occur until the Gospel had been preached in all the world, are the same? If they are the same, all the worse for our pre-millennial friends, for the time specified for the coming in the first passage is already long past. Therefore, that of the second is long past also, and neither of them refers to His personal advent.

But the Gospel has not yet been preached in all the world for a witness, as Pre-millennialists believe, and all must hold who believe this coming to be His personal advent; for had it been, our Lord would have come as He had promised. The coming of Matt. 10 : 23, at least, is long past.

(4) Our Lord declares He himself would come in the coming of the Spirit (John 14 : 18, 23; 16 : 16-22).

(5) There is also a coming of the Lord which is spiritual (Rev. 3 : 20; Eph. 2 : 17, etc.).

2. In view of these forms in which our Lord is said to come, how shall we explain the references to His coming in the New Testament ?

(1) Let us notice, first, the class of passages in which believers are represented as waiting, or looking for the coming of the Lord, or are exhorted thus to do.

"So that ye come behind in no gift : waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ : who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye be* unproveable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1 : 7, 8). "For our citizenship is in heaven : from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, *that it may be* conformed to the body of His glory" (Phil. 3 : 20, 21). "How ye turned unto God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1 : 9, 10). "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ"

(Tit. 2 : 12, 13). "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God," etc. (2 Pet. 3 : 11, 12).

There are some Pre-millennialists who deem it impossible to wait for, or look for, a coming of the Lord which is not possible at any moment. They, therefore, conclude from these passages, as well as from others, that the New Testament writers must have regarded the personal advent of our Lord as possibly at hand. But this is an extreme view of the case, as some pre-millennial brethren themselves acknowledge ; for we can wait and look for what we know to be in the future. We wait and look for the return of dear friends from the day of their departure, although they are to be absent for weeks or months or even years. In this case, "wait" is used in the sense of making the return the great object of desire ; it is ever kept in longing thought. A general is said to wait for a battle he knows will not be fought for days or weeks. "Wait," in this case, is used in the sense of having all his preparations so made for the enemy that he has nothing else to do, with reference to the coming conflict, until the battle. In both these senses we can wait and look for the coming of the Lord, whatever be our idea of the time of His coming. The condition of the waiting is not the nearness but the certainty of His coming. If we know that our Lord is surely coming, and that we shall have the same share in all the blessings He comes to bring whether

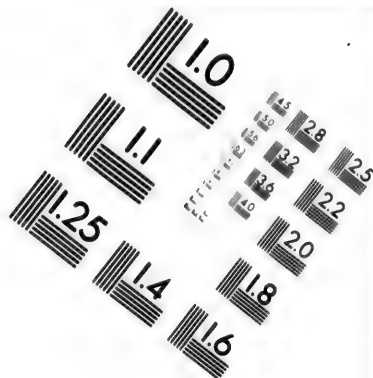
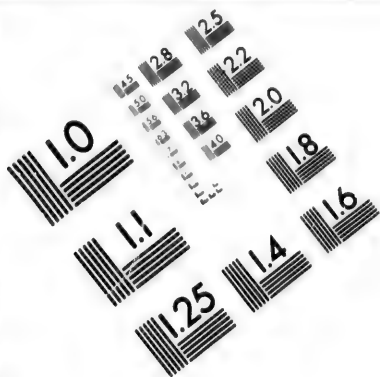
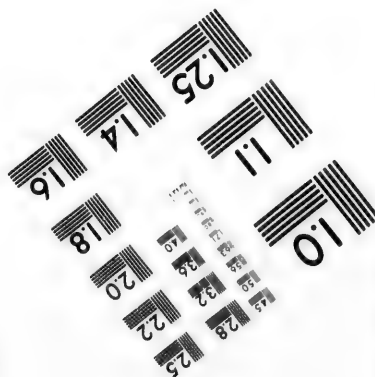
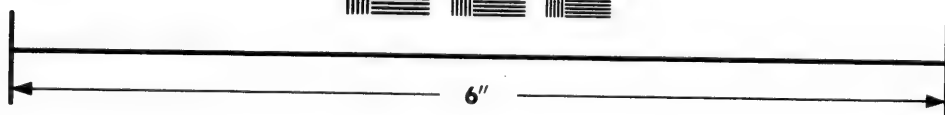
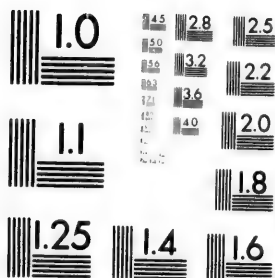


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He appears to-morrow or a thousand years hence, we can hold His coming in thought as the great object of desire, and be moved to faithfulness in order to be prepared for it, especially when it is remembered that the time for this preparation is limited to a life which may end at any time.

But neither Paul nor Peter, when writing these epistles, in which these expressions are found, thought the coming of the Lord might be immediately impending.

In the last chapter of First Corinthians, in which one of the passages is found, Paul expects to return to Corinth (16: 2), then to send on their contributions to Jerusalem, and perhaps go himself (vs. 3, 4) after he had passed through Macedonia (v. 5). He expects to tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost, etc. Now, if the Corinthians could wait for what they knew would not take place for months, and was indefinitely future, why was it impossible to wait for what was to be a thousand years hence? Then we know that in the second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul definitely puts the coming of the Lord into the indefinite future. He could not have meant, therefore, in 1 Thess. 1: 9, 10, that the coming of the Lord might be immediately impending, because the Thessalonian Christians were to "wait for his Son from heaven."

This class of passages really teaches that believers are to keep the coming of the Lord, as the great consummation of their highest hopes, ever present in their thought and feeling, so as to act continually in view of it and its power, as though it were actually near.

(2) In the second place, let us notice the class of passages in which believers are exhorted to faithfulness, or growth in grace is said to continue "until" Christ comes.

"He which began a sure work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1: 6); "That ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ" (v. 10); "That thou keep the commandment without spot, without reproach, until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6: 14); "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord" (Jas. 5: 7); "Trade ye herewith till I come" (Luke 19: 13); "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye—the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15: 51, 52); "We that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4: 15).

As already remarked, these passages, if they teach anything about the nearness of our Lord's advent, declare too much, for they would make it apparent that the authors of the New Testament not only thought this great event possibly, but certainly near. This would be in conflict with the knowledge they show they had of events which they knew must happen before His coming.

It would also prove that, in statements which are made in the most categorical way, they were in the most grievous error, and would make it impossible for us to trust them as inspired teachers in anything. How then are we to explain these various passages?

Our Lord and the scripture writers knew that their teaching was for more than those first addressed. They had in mind all to whom it was to apply down through the ages to the end. When Paul says to the Corinthians, "For as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11 : 26), he did not mean that these identical believers were to continue to observe the Supper till the coming of the Lord. He had in mind the whole continuous line of believers, beginning with them, and reaching down to the second coming. The "ye" of direct address included all living saints until that time. This great succession of believers should continue to observe the Supper until His second advent. So, also, our Lord, in the great commission, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28 : 19, 20). He surely did not expect the eleven disciples he was addressing to "make disciples of all the nations." It was not with them only He was to be "until the end of the world." He evidently had in mind the collective body of believers beginning with them, but reaching on until the end of the world, when the great commission should be fulfilled. In the parable (Luke 19 : 13) the ten servants represent all of the class mentioned throughout the ages. In this same way must 1 Cor. 15 : 51, 52 and 1 Thess. 4 : 15 be explained. Paul did not expect, with the Corinthian and Thessalonian brethren, to live on until our Lord's second advent. There were to be two classes then, the dead and the

living; the former to be raised, the latter to be changed. He naturally continues to reckon himself and his fellow-Christians then, in the class they were in now, as in his thought he thus takes in all the living and all the dead.

Another principle comes in, perhaps, to help us explain some of the passages that remain. The second coming looms up, often, in overshadowing grandeur, in the apostle's thought. Then, also, only the life on earth has to do with determining the relation in which men will stand to this grand event, whether as prepared or unprepared. It is not surprising, therefore, that the time between death and the second coming should drop out of view, both as overshadowed by it, and as having no direct bearing upon the condition of men in that fateful day; and that this supreme and transcendent day should be spoken of as in immediate connection with the life on earth. The first four passages given above seem, on this principle, to have a natural explanation.

(3) In this connection let us consider the last, and perhaps the most difficult, group of passages we need to examine. We refer to those in which men are commanded to watch, in view of the coming of the Lord. We may be surprised to know that all of these in the gospels are in connection with a single discourse of our Lord. We have then, really but the varied references of this kind to deal with, given at a single sitting of our Lord. It will be found that parts of all the passages in Mark and Luke, embodying commands to watch, are contained in Matt. 24: 37-51. We con-

clude, therefore, that what they give, in these connected passages, not found in Matt. 24: 37-51, are but fuller accounts of the same thought.

Let us, then, examine Matt. 24: 37-51 in the connection in which it stands. The difficulty in interpreting this discourse of our Lord, as given in Matt. 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, is acknowledged.

In Mark 13: 4 and Luke 21: 7 it is represented as given in answer to a specific question as to the time when the temple was to be destroyed. In Matt. 24: 3, there is added, "And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Our Lord answers both the questions. But the answer is not first given of one and then of the other, with a clear line of division between: it is rather, in part of the discourse, at least, an answer of one of the questions through that of the other which was its type.

The crux of the difficulty is in v. 34: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things be accomplished." There are three chief interpretations. There is that of the rationalistic interpreters who hold that "generation" here means the people then living, and that our Lord really believed Jerusalem was not only to fall, but He himself was to return in person to end the world, within this brief space. This view, as is readily seen, assumes that our Lord is not only ignorant of the time of His coming, but though ignorant, He makes the most positive statement possible, prefacing it with "verily" as though it could not be disputed, as to the *terminus ad quem*, for His coming; and that this positive state-

ment, made with such perfect assurance and with such manifest intention that it should be received as true, was to prove false by we know not how much more than eighteen centuries. We can suppose our Lord ignorant of the precise time of His second coming; but we cannot believe Him to be unconscious of His ignorance, or, when conscious of it, to hazard the most positive statements as though He had the most definite knowledge. This interpretation, at least, assumes our Lord not only to be ignorant, but that He might think that He knew that whereof He was thus ignorant, and to declare, under this delusion, what was to prove untrue. Then away forever with the thought of His infallibility as a teacher of truth. But how, in that case, is it to be explained that, in no other instance, has the truth of either His prophecies or His teachings been successfully challenged by candid men? If He were in such grievous error in His statement in this discourse as to His second coming, how comes it that in all pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem the event proved Him to have had such accurate knowledge? We reject this interpretation as not self-consistent, and as involving what is contradictory and subversive of all reliance upon even the words of our Lord as a revelation from God.

The second is the pre-millennial interpretation which makes the word "generation" mean "nation" or "race." The verse then reads: "This nation or race shall not pass away," etc.

But, as Dr. Broadus says, "The word cannot have

any other meaning here than the obvious one. The attempts to establish for it the sense of *race* or *nation* have failed. There are some examples in which it might have such a meaning, but none in which it must, for in every case the recognized meaning will answer, and so another sense is not admissible.*

Olshausen also declares, "The word *γενεα* is not used in the sense of nation in any one passage, either of the New Testament or of profane writers."†

So of commentators generally, excepting Alford.

But even though the sense *nation* were allowable here, on philological grounds, it would not help those who hold the coming of the Lord spoken of in this chapter to be exclusively His personal advent; for the Jewish nation has long ceased to exist, and still our Lord tarries. If "generation" here means "nation," the coming in our Lord's thought, when He uttered these words, must have been the providential, at the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Romans took away from the Jews their "name and nation." Neither will the sense of *race* serve, in the connection of this passage. Did the disciples suppose the race of men in general, or of the Jews in particular, might be blotted out before their Lord's return, that He needed to assure them to the contrary, in this most solemn and emphatic way? If this were their thought which He needed to correct, they evidently did not suppose His personal advent to be very near, for we can scarcely suppose they thought the race was about

* "Commentary" *in loco*.

† "Commentary" *in loco*.

to be cut off. Besides, the implication of the words, "This generation shall not pass away until," etc., is that what is foretold is not completely fulfilled "until" the generation is near its end. If generation here mean *race*, then it means that the coming of the Lord here spoken of is to be delayed until the Jewish race was nearing the end of its existence. In any case, then, this discourse, on the pre-millennial assumption, instead of giving the impression that our Lord's second coming might possibly be nigh, would put it forward into the dim and indefinite distance, and make inexplicable how He could proceed to give the disciples the solemn warnings to watch and be ready, lest it might come upon them as a thief.

It is also evident our Lord thought it extremely important that His disciples should hear what He was saying. He introduces this sentence with the emphatic note of attention, "Verily." Can we doubt He intended them to understand Him and thought they did so? But could they possibly have understood this generation here to have meant this race, when the word He used never signified race but always generation, and when, too, there was a word which meant race rather than generation, which He might have used? But did He intend them to understand the word which usually, if not invariably, meant the short period of a single life, to have the sense of race, a term covering a great and indefinite length of time? If He did make them understand that in the connection in which He used it, the word meant an indefinitely long instead of a short period, then can

we escape the conclusion that He took special pains to disabuse their minds of the thought of the possible nearness of His second advent, and intended the men of that generation, at least, to dismiss it from their practical thought?

Thus we see that no help can come to the pre-millennial view, even if we allow the word generation the meanings its advocates would force upon the word.

The third interpretation of this passage does not ask us to believe our Lord used the word "generation" in an unusual, if not an unknown, sense, and then urged upon them the fact thus stated in language they would not be expected to understand, as though it were of the greatest practical moment. The usual, if not the invariable, meaning of the word is maintained.

It is in this generation—in the lifetime of the people then living—that all these things, including the Lord's coming, were to have their fulfilment. But how can this be when He had been speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem and His second and personal advent?

As we have already seen, there was a coming of the Lord to occur in the lifetime of that generation. In Matt. 16:28: "There be some that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Dr. Broadus, voicing the conclusion of a host of commentators, declares this is an undoubted reference to the destruction of Jerusalem.* And yet, in the preceding verse

* "Com. on Matt.," pp. 228, 368.

(Matt. 16 : 27) our Lord had as undoubtedly been referring to His second and visible advent: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then shall he render unto every man according to his deed." There is here the most sudden transition from His second personal coming, which none then living was to see, to a coming so near that some then living should behold it. In the same way, in this discourse of Matt. 24, our Lord makes as sudden transitions between what refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and His second advent. How can this be explained except that the destruction of Jerusalem here, as in Matt. 16 : 28, is spoken of as a coming of the Lord, and a type of His final coming, so that one can be, and is, referred to in terms of the other? Our Lord saw in the destruction of Jerusalem a reflection of His grander coming at the end of the world. While speaking directly of the one, He also had His eye fixed, through it, upon the other. There is thus an interblending, to a large extent, of the two events, and language is used of one which will apply to both. The lesser coming is the type and prophecy of the grander, and the same descriptions have a double reference to both. We do not mean that all the language is of this character, but that some of it is. Understood in this way, v. 34 means: "All the things which are to have a grander fulfilment in my grander coming, this generation shall live to see in the lesser fulfilment in my lesser coming, at the destruction of Jerusalem. Ye shall live to see the fulfilment of all these things in the type,

which are later to come to pass in the grander way in the antitype." Students of Old Testament prophecy, who have noticed how the grander deliverances of the gospel day are described in language which refers directly to the rescue from the captivity in Babylon, and how, in many other cases, the prophets weave descriptions of what is to occur in the remote future around events which are soon to happen to those whom they are addressing, will not have so great difficulty in accepting this interpretation of Matt. 24 : 34.

Understood in this way, the exhortations to watchfulness because of the imminence and suddenness of the Lord's coming which follow, are not so hard to explain. There was a coming which was imminent. This was the grand stroke of His providence in the destruction of Jerusalem. While this one coming in this one providential event would serve as a basis of warning for the people of the first generation of our era, just as His grander personal coming would thus serve for the last, our Lord was speaking for the people of all ages, and these two specific comings would not serve this purpose for the generations between. We find our Lord, therefore, in Matt. 24 : 45 *sq.*, and in Luke 12 : 42 where the same or a similar discourse is recorded, generalizing, and thus making the warnings applicable to all in all time, by stating there was a coming for reward to the faithful and judgment upon the unfaithful which was sure to all, and which we have found reason to believe is our Lord's providential coming at death.

These forms of our Lord's providential comings are but types of His final and personal advent, and gain their fullest significance from it. Through these lesser foreshadowings, therefore, men are to have their minds fixed upon the larger reality, just as the Jews were to see Christ's greater sacrifice through the typical offerings of the old economy. While referring, therefore, to the nearer event, and the language, "Ye know not the day nor the hour," and similar expressions are appropriate to it directly, in a larger sense, we are to watch, also, in view of the grander coming, as we are vigilant and ever alert to be ready for it, seeing that our term for preparation for it will expire with His earlier coming at death, which is, therefore, practically so far as readiness to meet it is concerned, the same as His final appearance. In this way our Lord lays the foundation for a perpetual watchfulness, which does not depend for its existence for all generations up to the present and no one knows how long in the future, upon men being kept in ignorance, and which, if the time of His second coming were made known, could not be exercised. There is a coming of the Lord which is always imminent for all. At this coming our destiny will be fixed for the grander coming which is to follow. It is little wonder, under these circumstances, if often the intervening time which does not bear on our relation to final destiny at the grander coming, should drop out of view, and these two comings be practically treated as one.

Along this line of interpretation is to be found, we

believe, the solution of the difficulties of this difficult chapter. As all our Lord's exhortations to watchfulness are contained in this single discourse, delivered by Him to His disciples as He sat on the Mount of Olives, over against the Temple, this explanation, if it suffices for any of them, suffices for all.

Some pains have thus been taken to present the results of an inductive study of the teaching of the New Testament on the coming of the Lord. All the passages bearing upon the subject have been examined with honest care. The conclusions reached, with as much of the grounds upon which they rest as could be embodied in this condensed treatise, are left with the reader in the hope that they may prove of service in relieving a perplexing subject of some of its difficulties.

Let it be understood, however, that this subject has not been discussed because it was thought some explanation of this kind must be found or the pre-millennial view accepted. There is no such alternative as this. Our Lord and the scripture writers were either ignorant of the over eighteen hundred years which have passed and the unknown length of years which are still to intervene before He comes, or they were not. If the future, during all this great period of years with its crowding events of highest moment for the Church and the world, was so hidden from them that they really thought the Lord's second advent might surprise them with its transcendent events before they died, what right have our pre-millennial friends to assume they must know of the thousand years of

the millennium, if it were to precede this coming, any more than the other thousand and more, and, perhaps, many thousands of years, which were to pass before He was to return? But if they did know that a great stretch of years was to pass before the second advent, then, according to our pre-millennial friends who interpret all His references to His coming as of His personal appearing, they must have commanded the believers of their day to watch, etc., lest the coming of the Lord should take them unawares, although His second advent was known to be far distant. But if they used these expressions in a sense which would be thus allowable, although one or two, or perhaps many, thousands of years lay between them and the coming in view of which they were to watch, etc., there then would be no impropriety in using them, although the thousand years of the millennium were to be added to the years which were to precede His advent. So, also, if they declared this coming was at hand, although all this time was to elapse before He was to appear, they might equally have said it was nigh, although the millennium was to be over before His coming.

This reasoning holds of all the New Testament writings except Revelation; for in all these there is not the slightest allusion to a millennium. It is only near the end of this last inspired message from God that the single reference to it is found. But Revelation is also the one book in which there is a series of visions supposed to cover the whole period from John's time until after the second advent. And yet

our Lord, in full view of this and also in His exaltation above all the limitations of His knowledge as to the time of His reappearing, says, at the close of Revelation, "Yea I come quickly." Now, if our Lord used these words of His personal coming, He used them in a sense consistent with the delay of His second advent for hundreds and, perhaps, thousands of years. Why should they not be consistent, then, in the same sense, although the millennium is to precede His coming?

On any imaginable ground that Pre-millennialists may take, therefore, the argument that if the millennium were to come before our Lord's second advent, this grand event could not have been spoken of as possibly near, does not hold good. Whatever the reader may think of the view above elaborated, the pre-millennial argument just stated does not hold, and all that has been hitherto advanced on the general question at issue between Pre-millennialists and Post-millennialists, maintains its full force.

CHAPTER XI.

THE POWER OF HIS COMING.

OUR pre-millennial brethren regard their view as necessary to the highest motive power for the Christian life. It is for this reason they esteem it of such supreme importance, and press it with such vigor. It is not the fact and certainty of our Lord's coming so much as its possible immediate nearness, upon which this great power depends. It is only as it is thought each day the glory of His coming may flash across the sky before night, that believers are impelled, in full measure, to that attitude of waiting and readiness which is most conducive to growth in character and faithfulness in service. If this be not the great motive of the Christian life itself, it is thought to add intensity to all other motives. The hope of it is the grand inspiration, the supreme joy. It makes love glow and adds fresh ardor to the desire to be holy. It quickens every spiritual energy, and makes labor and sacrifice easy. It arouses missionary enthusiasm, as the work of preaching the Gospel for a witness to all nations is pressed, in order that the glad day for His return may be hastened, by fulfilling its conditions. Without the motive power of the thought that

our Lord may appear at any moment, many think the Christian life to be powerless and dead.

There is no dispute but that the personal advent of our Lord is held up in the New Testament as a grand object of Christian anticipation, and as fitted to stir the energies of the new life to activity and faithfulness. The real question is whether its motive power depends upon the conviction that His advent is possibly near, or upon the assurance, whether near or far away, of its certainty, and that we shall, whether near or far, have our share in all the blessedness of that glad day for the Lord's people.

If the blessedness of the hope of the Lord's coming and the strength of its motive power, have depended upon its possible immediateness, then, for eighteen centuries, all believers would have had to rest upon what was to prove illusive and, in the end, disappointing, for their chief comfort in affliction and their chief inspiration in labor. Can we believe God intended all these increasing hosts of believers down through the centuries to have as their chief dependence for growth in character and faithfulness in life, an expectation which He knew was to prove altogether empty and false? For He knew that the time of the Lord's second coming was not to be possibly near during all this time, but was as fixed in His plan and purpose as any other event. But our pre-millennial brethren ask us to accept more than this. They would have us believe God to have carefully arranged all things so as to make it possible for this false hope to be maintained throughout the centuries

since Christ's departure, and until He may return. To this end our Lord is to come twice again, once for His people and again with them. For this purpose He seals from His prophets all the history of the Church between Christ's departure and His return for His people.*

In like manner the history of the nations is a blank to them, until after this coming for His people, although up to the time of Christ's ascension and beyond this coming, there are crowded visions of what is to be. Thus, and in other ways, they would have us think God has planned, in the most skilful way, to keep up the illusion of the ever-continued possible imminence of the Lord's coming, down through the centuries, and thus maintain what He knew was to prove an empty and false expectation as the great hope and motive power of His people. If a father who did not intend to return to his family for, say, ten years, should plan as skilfully to make his wife and children believe he might come back at any moment during this period, be the purpose what it might be, we should consider it deliberate deception—an attempt to make capital out of what was false. We have tried to find some way in which to attribute similar action to God and make it consistent with His righteousness, but have failed, and have given plainly the impression this view makes upon us. The alternative view, which draws motive power and inspiration to growth in grace and fidelity

* "Papers on the Lord's Coming," by C. H. M., pp. 22, 28.

in service from the consideration that the coming of the Lord is certain, and that our lives on earth have as full bearing on that day as though it were to come before our death, is immeasurably superior, because more scriptural, we believe, and more rational, and because it casts no dark shadow upon the character of God's moral government.

Turning from the moral complexion of the motive from our Lord's personal coming to its strength, we more than doubt whether the view which makes this depend upon the belief of its possible nearness rather than its positive certainty, has any advantage over the alternative conception. Let it be possible for us to believe that God has so planned the form and substance of His inspired teaching as to give the impression to all, in all the ages, that the second advent of the Lord may come at any moment; and still, unless we were constituted differently, the power of the motive from the continuous imminence of His coming, in distinction from its certainty, could not maintain itself. So far as the nearness of His coming is to stimulate us, it must be in the hope He may come before our death, to save us from the necessity of dying. If He delay until after we die, it matters little to us whether His coming be in a year or in a thousand years from the day of our burial; for surely, when we are with Christ, even though disembodied, we shall be satisfied to wait God's time for the redemption of our bodies. As soon as a thoughtful man begins to attempt to draw inspiration from the idea that the Lord may come before his death, he is

faced by this fact. The very language of Scripture upon which he bases this hope, is the language which was intended to give the same hope to thousands and millions throughout eighteen slow-moving centuries. All these hosts had the same right to expect His coming which he has, and some of them did cherish this hope. And yet, for all these, days grew into weeks and the weeks into years, as middle age succeeded youth and old age drew on apace to those who lived to length of days. While the time grew short, if He were to come before the time for their death, the grand hope which they had made their chief support in trial, and their supreme incentive to fidelity, would either become a frenzy of disappointment, or would fade away, to be replaced by others which had been founded upon something more substantial than "a might be," which was to prove without ground. He cannot but have the thought suggested: if God's inspired message encouraged all the generations from our Lord's ascension to hope for His immediate return, and to make this expectation their chief motive, although eighteen centuries have gone and He has not appeared, why should He not have used the same language, although as many more centuries are to elapse before His people shall greet Him from the skies? Especially will this be the thought of the intelligent Pre-millennialist who holds the most advanced views, that God has revealed nothing of what was to happen from the end of the apostolic age until the second coming of the Lord for His people; for, if there be nothing revealed which must happen before He comes, equally

there can possibly be nothing to show us when this coming is near. It is only of the later coming with His people that there are signs in the coming to pass of events which are revealed as succeeding His coming for His people. The time from any point in history, according to this theory, to His coming for His people, being a perfect blank, may be two thousand, or it may be two hundred thousand years. There are no data upon which to form an estimate. At the outset, then, the man who believes the one great hope and inspiration of his life is to be in the coming of the Lord before the time for his own death, will find it hard to believe His coming is so probable as to make the hope sufficiently certain to serve so great a purpose. He cannot but feel that as millions have been disappointed who had as good a ground for their hope as he, the balance of probability is unspeakably against his hope being realized, and if he holds to the name of this hope as the great power of his life, he still has lost the reality.

But even allowing that he can shut his eyes to all this, and that he begins life in the power of this hope, each morning he thinks, "My Lord may come before night," and the hope thrills him. But He does not come. He is inspired by the hope, but to the extent he is thus animated, will he be disappointed when He does not appear. Months grow into years, and every day he hopes, and every day his hope is not realized. In the meantime, day by day, he sees funeral processions, and knows men who should be relying upon the hope of Christ's coming before their

death as much as he, to be feeling its icy touch, and that this cherished desire has only, in the end, made it harder for them to die. Can a man possibly, under all these circumstances and conditions, maintain this hope of the coming of Christ before his death in full strength as an inspiration and motive power? It is simply impossible so to force what is an improbability at the beginning, and which grows more improbable and disappointing as the years pass, into an expectation of sufficient confidence to serve this purpose. The hope, like all that is constrained and unnatural, can at best but be spasmodic. The history of the denomination which has made this hope of our Lord's immediate appearance their great central peculiarity and tenet, proves this. It is a record of convulsive spasms, rather than an ever-growing life of permanent spiritual power. It is hard to believe that God would have His people depend for their greatest hope and motive power upon what can only be held through their being kept in ignorance, which a knowledge of the facts would make absolutely impossible, from which, even when kept in ignorance, they can only get inspiration as they close their eyes to the most overwhelming balance of improbability, which, as actually tested, has proved insufficient to maintain a sustained and high level of impelling force upon Christian life and character, and which, in the end, in all the hosts of believers who shall die in all generations except the last, is to prove as vain as disappointing. Is it not more probable that He intended the motive power of the Lord's coming to depend

upon what is certain, upon what requires no condition of ignorance and concealment, which leads to no disappointment, and which is equally fitted to move all generations and the whole term of all lives with a steady, even impulse—the fact that our Lord is certainly to come again, the fact that we shall all have our part in what He comes to bring to the class to which we belong, the fact that it is our life before death which determines what that coming is to be for us, the fact that we can therefore wait for His coming as a grand object of expectation, whether it is near or far, and watch, in order to be ready for it, whether before death or ten thousand years hence?

It is also to be noticed that in proportion as the imminence of the second advent of our Lord is made the great hope and motive, other hopes and motives drop out of view and lose something of their power. Especially is this true of going to be with Christ at death, which is ever imminent, and must soon come. While our pre-millennial friends rightly protest against confusing this with the second and personal coming of the Lord, they also manifest a certain kind of impatience at the thought of any help or inspiration coming to the Christian life from this consideration. Now, we need not put the death of the Christian and his going to be with Christ in place of the personal coming which is to follow, in order to gain from it motives to earnest work and fidelity. It is evident that each is fitted to give its own distinct and abiding impulse. New Testament writers recognize this. Leaving out of the question the passages referred to

in the preceding treatment as describing a coming of the Lord at death, we have our Lord himself saying to His disciples: "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9 : 4). Our Lord brings to bear upon His disciples the motive which continually quickened His own energies. The time before the end of life was so short, they must be ever alert to do the work of God. Peter also was moved from the same consideration: "And I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance: knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me. Yea, I will give diligence, that at every time ye may be able after my decease to call these things to remembrance" (2 Pet. 1 : 13-15). In 2 Cor. 5 : 9, 10, "Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," etc., Paul gathers his motive, not from the possible nearness of the Lord's coming, but the certainty of the judgment which His coming will bring. The man who lives under the consciousness that he must soon depart and be with Christ, and also under the power of the thought that this short and uncertain time will determine what Christ's coming with all its grand attendant events will be for him, as he shall as certainly have a part in them as though they were to be introduced to-morrow, will not lack the fullest motive power from the consideration of the presence of Christ, and the terrors and splendors of His

second coming. There will also be no risk of saddening disappointment because that which has been made the greatest expectation is not realized, and all other motives are also left in full force. Comparing the general life of those who depend for motive upon what, up to the present, in all the ages has not been realized, and of those who depend only upon what is certain, we do not think the balance is in favor of the former. While there have been seasons of unnatural stimulation, as they have held up before themselves the illusion that the Lord was just at hand, the seasons of reaction have been as marked, and the whole life has been of an unhealthy type. In the case of those who hold the doctrine in its more moderate form, it is doubtful whether the motive power from the possible nearness of our Lord's coming is really so much as is supposed. Is it not better to become so absorbed in just doing the will of our Lord that the thought of the time of His coming as it affects us personally may have less weight? We know we can please our Lord equally well whether His advent be near or far.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST DAY.

It is generally, if not universally, conceded that the expressions "day of judgment," "day of the Lord," "last day," "that day," are all essentially equivalent. Through holding the judgment of the righteous and the wicked to be separated by a long stretch of years, Pre-millennialists are required to regard this "day of judgment," etc., as a great period filled with transcendent and diversified events.

The class of Pre-millennialists who believe in a coming of Christ for His people and another with them, include in this day (1) The coming of the Lord for His people; (2) Their resurrection and the rapture; (3) Their judgment and reward; (4) The great tribulation; (5) The restoration of Israel; (6) The revelation of Antichrist; (7) The conversion of the Jews; (8) The coming of the Lord with His people; (9) The judgment of the nations; (10) The destruction of Antichrist; (11) The resurrection of the tribulation saints; (12) The personal reign of Christ for one thousand years; (13) The last great uprising of wickedness; (14) The resurrection, punishment and judgment of the wicked; (15) The last conflagration.

Those of the Pre-millennialists who do not commit themselves to the doctrine of a coming for, and a coming with, His people, believe this "day" to include 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 of the above. Post-millennialists believe this day includes the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of good and bad, the judgment of all, their reward and punishments respectively, and the last conflagration. Let us refer to all the passages in which these terms are used, and see whether there is any allusion in them to the restoration and conversion of the Jews, the personal reign of Christ over a holy people upon the earth, a great uprising of the wicked and their attack upon the saints while He is with them in personal presence and power, which all classes of Pre-millennialists believe included in that day. Almost all believe, also, that during the millennial part of this "day," the work of salvation which has made little progress prior to our Lord's coming, will then, in connection with the labors of the Jews who are to be converted at its beginning, sweep over the earth in glorious might, until all men are brought to the feet of Jesus in devoted subjection and adoring love.

But what do the Scriptures say that day contains ?

The dead are to be raised on that "last day" (John 6 : 39, 40, 44, 54 ; 11 : 24).

That day shall be the great day of searching judgment. Men shall be then judged by the word of Christ (John 12 : 48), the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 2 : 16), must give account for every idle word (Matt. 12 : 36), will have the emptiness of mere formal service exposed

(Matt. 7 : 22), and the character of their service revealed (1 Cor. 3 : 13).

In the testing of the searching judgment of this day, the wicked shall be declared guilty and shall be punished.

Those who reject the preaching of the apostles shall be under deeper condemnation and penalty than Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 10 : 15; Luke 10 : 15), Capernaum than Sodom (Matt. 11 : 22), Chorazin and Bethsaida than Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 11 : 21). The wicked are kept "under punishment unto the day of judgment" (2 Pet. 2 : 9). That day is to be the day of "destruction of ungodly men" (2 Pet. 3 : 7). Evil angels are kept unto the judgment of this "great day" (Jude 6). Because on this day, the doom of the wicked is made manifest and God's righteous displeasure against sin it is called the "day of wrath" (Rom. 2 : 5).

In that day of searching judgment, the faithful shall be "unreproveable" (1 Cor. 1 : 8), "void of offence" (Phil 1 : 10), "have boldness" (1 John 4 : 17), "have whereof to glory" (Phil 2 : 16), "receive a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4 : 8), "find mercy" (2 Tim. 1 : 18), glory in those saved through them (2 Cor. 1 : 14), Christ is then to be glorified in His saints (2 Thess. 1 : 10).

In that day, there is to be the great conflagration spoken of in 2 Pet. 3 : 10 *sq.*

The only other passages in which any of these expressions is used, are 1 Cor. 5 : 5, Phil. 1 : 6, 1 Thess. 5 : 2-4, 2 Thess. 2 : 2, 2 Tim. 1 : 12, Heb. 10 : 25, which

tell us nothing on the question at issue between Pre-millennialists and Post-millennialists.

So far as these declared descriptions of this day, so variously designed, specify, it includes just four things—the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of the righteous and the wicked with the condemnation and penalty and the justification and reward associated with it, and the great conflagration of 2 Peter, which some reverent interpreters do not take literally. There is not the shadow of a shade of a hint that this day includes the restoration of the Jews and their conversion, the great era of the progress and triumph of the Gospel, the personal reign of Christ on earth, and a great rebellion of the wicked in the very face of the omnipotent Saviour in personal presence, and after a thousand years of the display of His invincible might.

If this day is really to include this long and grand series of events, how is it that not the remotest reference or allusion to any one of them is found in a single one of the numerous and varied descriptions of it? Could our Lord and the apostles have believed this day was to include them all and still have kept out the most incidental allusion to them from all their references to it? Where might we more expect to find references to these events than in the descriptions of what is alleged to be the period of which they form some of the grandest features? If the descriptions of this day were few, or these events which Pre-millennialists would thrust into it, of an insignificant character, it would be conceivable that they might

make part of this day, though not mentioned in the scant reference to even its more transcendent features; but where the descriptions of this day and the allusions to it are so many and varied, and these events which are alleged to be included in it are so grand and blessed, can we reach any other conclusion than that they are not mentioned in the descriptions of the day, simply because they do not belong to it?

Besides, the whole impression made by an exhaustive study of all the passages in which the "day of judgment" and its kindred terms are used, is just the opposite of its being a long period. This day bursts upon the world with lightning-like suddenness. It comes like the stroke of doom to all the wicked. All arms opposed to Christ are palsied by the glory, and grandeur, and divine might of the personally-present Judge. No puny arm of rebellion will ever be lifted after He appears in transcendent majesty. There is no long and gracious period in which Christ's loving calls continue to woo the wicked, and draw multitudes into the kingdom, as never before. There are no long centuries of blessed life on earth in this "day." It is to be as swift in its progress as sudden in its coming. Its tremendous events crowd each other across the scene. They are all homogeneous, having their centre and unity in the judgment seat of Christ, His coming and the resurrection as preparatory to it, and the reward and penalty as consequent upon it.

While, therefore, we must not restrict "the day" to twenty-four hours, it does appear that the persistent and invariable use of this brief natural period to

describe the era of these grand events, was intended to impress upon us its relative brevity—that it is to be too short to include a millennium of years with the addition of an indefinite period, as Pre-millennialists believe.

Nor is this all. Notice the significance of the fact that this day is called “the last day” as well as “the day of the Lord” and “the day of judgment.” Reference is made to the same period, as the end of the world, or age, in Matt. 13 : 39, 40, 49 ; 24 : 3 ; 28 : 20, where the same great events, the judgment separation, the coming of the Lord, and the end of the gospel age, are spoken of. John uniformly calls this period “the last day,” Matthew “the day of judgment” and “the end of the world” or age, Paul “that day” or “the day of the Lord,” Peter “the day of judgment” and “the day of God.” Its designation as “the last day,” and “the end of the world” or age, fixes its relative place in time. So far as we know, there is no dispute, either that all these designations refer to the same period, or that the age of which it is “the last day,” or “end,” is the present gospel age, which is to close with the coming of the Lord, as distinguished from the age to come which then sets in. Pre-millennialists, believing not only that the age to come is introduced by the coming of the Lord, but that He will come to introduce the millennium, hold that the millennium forms part of the age to come.

It does not require much penetration to see the contradictions and inconsistencies which the pre-millennial conception of “the day of judgment” or

"last day," involves, when brought face to face with their belief that the millennium forms part of the age to come—nay, constitutes that age. Unquestionably, "the day of judgment," which is also termed "the last day," includes the judgment of the wicked, as well as the coming of the Lord and the judgment of the righteous. But Pre-millennialists all hold that the judgment of the wicked is not until after the millennium has been succeeded by the great uprising of wickedness at its close (Rev. 20 : 11 *sq.*). They, therefore, make the day of judgment, which is also described as the last day, include all the millennium, with all the events they believe will then take place. That is to say, the last day or end of this evil age, as distinguished from the glorious millennial age which is to follow, includes all this very age to come and perhaps more! What would we say of the man who should declare that the last day, or end of the nineteenth century is to include all the twentieth century with all its crowding events?

What shall we say of the theory which makes it necessary to suppose our Lord and His apostles guilty, in their use of language, of folly just as great?

If anything is plain, it is that these ages stretch over different periods of time. No event, therefore, of the one can occur in the temporal limits of the other, any more than an object can be in two places at the same time. In any case, can we conceive scripture writers to be so unmindful of the properties of language as to designate as a day of an age a period longer than the one they call an age? It will also be noticed that the

pre-millennial view makes the resurrection and judgment of the righteous and of the wicked occur in two distinct ages, the wicked being raised and judged in the age or world to come.

Does not all the plain teaching of the New Testament give the opposite impression? In this case, especially, we do not see how it is possible to force the pre-millennial interpretation of Rev. 20: 4-11 upon the rest of the New Testament without bringing these verses into such flat contradiction with the teaching of the passages which refer to the day variously designated "the last day," "the day of judgment," etc., as to endanger the inspiration of either Rev. 20: 4-11, or of all the passages with which it is brought into conflict. Will anyone venture to assume, in order to escape the difficulty, that "the day of judgment," "the day of the Lord," etc., do not refer to the same period as that covered by "the last day"? But this would require great hardihood. It would be necessary to maintain that "the day of judgment" and "the last day" were not the same period, although the same grand events are said to take place in them both. It would also require him to defy the consensus of Christian scholarship.*

Or will anyone say that the millennial age belongs to the present age as distinguished from the age to come? But this would be to give up the central doctrine of Pre-millennialism, and take the heart out

* *E.g.*, see Cremer, Thayer, Robinson, "Lex. New Test. Greek," art. day (*ἡμέρα*).

of that whole system. Shall we then conclude that our Lord and His apostles used language with no more discrimination and propriety than to include in the last day of this age much if not all, of the age to come, from which, apparently, this term "last day" of this age was meant to distinguish it? There seems to be but one alternative to all these assumptions; and that is, to conclude that the theory which puts the millennium and the judgment of the wicked beyond the coming of the Lord in an age to come, as distinguished from the present age, is untenable, and must be abandoned in order to escape impossible conclusions.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

THERE is another issue between Pre-millennialists and Post-millennialists, namely, that in reference to the progress and outcome of the gospel dispensation.

Pre-millennialists teach that the preaching of the Gospel, even with the co-operating power of the omnipotent Spirit of God, was never designed to be the divine means by which the mass of mankind should be brought to the feet of Jesus. Instead of the world being gradually subdued by divine grace and power through the Gospel, and the millennium being ushered in as the grand climax of a progress which, though often halting, has been maintained, the might of evil is to go on gathering force and intensity, until it reaches its climax, and then Christ will come to smite down its reign. The object of the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Spirit is only for a witness against a world becoming more and more opposed to Christ, and to gather out an elect few.

In opposition to this, Post-millennialists hold that the preaching of the Gospel, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is the one and the only means designed by

God to bring a lost race to salvation. They believe that the Gospel, notwithstanding reactions, has made progress, and is to continue to advance. A time is to come when, through this progress, and, perhaps, some mighty and special energizing of divine power in connection with the work of the Church, the millennial era of righteousness and peace is to dawn upon a weary world. Through this halcyon time, goodness, and truth, and holiness are to prevail as never before. At the close, the elements of evil which existed during this period will again assert themselves, and in the last desperate struggle against the power of the Gospel will be smitten down forever by the descending Judge of quick and dead, as He comes to end this age, and usher in the ages of eternity.

The question is, which of these views is the scriptural one? Is it the teaching of the Bible that the Gospel, in the accompanying power of the Holy Ghost, is God's one means for the salvation of all who are to be saved; or are we to expect the great era of salvation to be in another age, under changed conditions, through the personal presence of Christ? Does the Bible say that the shadow of sin is to grow darker and darker over the earth from the time Christ came the first time until He is to return? Or does it justify a more hopeful view?

First, then, what do the Scriptures teach us as to God's purpose through the Gospel with the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit? Naturally, we first turn to the great commission. This was our Lord's

last general message for His people down through the ages. We might well expect here, if anywhere, to find our Lord's own statement of the great purpose of the service of His people through the Gospel. Let us study the pregnant words of Matt. 28: 18-20: "All authority hath been given me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Does "make disciples of all the nations" mean that the servants of Christ, as they go forth in obedience to His last injunction, can hope for nothing more, as the ultimate results of their work, than that an elect few shall be gathered out of the nations until the end of the world? Does it not rather mean that the work of evangelization is to go on until a day shall come, when practically, and in a general sense, "all the nations" shall become disciples of our Lord? If this be not so, then can we escape the conclusion that our Lord commanded His people to do something which He never intended or proposed should be done? The words "make disciples," "teaching to observe all things whatsoever I commanded," cover all of salvation, and exhaust all the provisions of the Gospel for the souls of men, and "all the nations" leaves none out. What is here commanded, therefore, omits nothing from its all-inclusive scope of God's purpose as to human salvation in the present life. Dare we

assume that it was not His purpose that what our Lord here commanded should be done in the sense in which it was enjoined? It was our Lord's purpose, then, that His servants should never consider their work done until the world should be brought to His feet through the efficacy of His work and through His power. The question still remains as to the period in which this great design of His, as indicated by His charge, should be fulfilled. And is not this also clearly made known in the introductory and concluding words of this same all-embracing passage, "All authority hath been given me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore," and "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" or age? It is His presence with them, in the all-embracing authority which has already been bestowed upon Him, that is the ground upon which God's people are commissioned to accomplish so mighty a task. He is to be with them, in this capacity of their all-sufficient helper, until the end of the age, or until His second personal coming to end the age.

Can there be the shadow of a doubt that this means He is to be with them as long as the work of discipling is to be continued? It is a promise to encourage them in their special work, during all ages, and is therefore an assurance of His presence until this work is done. When He says, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age," He declares that this work is to continue till then, and then it is to end. There seems to be no possible room left for the idea that the chief part of the work of discipling was not to

take place until after the end of the age in which He had promised to be with them for the purpose of helping them in this very work. Neither can we think that the chief part of this work was not to be done through the power He had already received from God, and which was to be manifested through the presence of the Spirit of Christ, as the passage plainly intimates ; but was to be accomplished in a new age, and in the exercise of another form of power—that of His personal presence, rather than of His Spirit, through whom He is present with His people in the sense here indicated. The great commission covers all God's purpose of grace to men on earth through the redemptive work of Christ, and this is all to be accomplished through the agency of God's people, before the end of this age, in the present dispensation of the Spirit. Any millennium, therefore, there is to be, must be within the scope of the great commission, and lie within the limits of the present age. Other passages contain the same teaching.

Acts 5 : 31, "Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." Peter had not yet been led out beyond his Jewish exclusiveness. He only mentions Israel, but the object of our Lord's exaltation was equally to give repentance and remission to all men. Just as in the great commission, our Lord says—"all authority" is given to Him, here Peter declares He has already taken His exalted seat of power as the dispenser of repentance and remission.

It is while thus exalted, and from the seat which He now occupies, that these sovereign powers are to be dispensed to men. While Peter does not declare that it is only from His present mediatorial throne this will be done, the language is altogether out of harmony with the thought that but little, comparatively, of the dispensing of repentance and pardon will be done until He has left His place at God's right hand. It is in the strictest agreement with the belief that all the dispensing of His grace will be done before He leaves this seat, and when He does leave it, human probation is at an end.

In this connection, we must refer again to Heb. 10:12, 13, "But he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet."

This passage is in strictest harmony with Acts 5:31, just considered. Our Lord, after offering himself on the cross as the one sacrifice for sins, sat down at God's right hand as Prince and Saviour, to dispense repentance and forgiveness. From the time that He takes this exalted seat of power, He expects or awaits, as the word really means, until, through the progress of this work of repentance and forgiveness which continues in connection with the preaching of the Gospel, His enemies shall finally become subject to His sway. If we say that this passage refers to the crushing of His enemies by omnipotent power, rather than subduing their hearts by the power of the Gospel, we have to suppose the writer of Hebrews, in

referring to the outcome of Christ's sacrificial work, as He "had offered one sacrifice of sins forever," and sat down on the right hand of God expecting the outcome, really thought it nothing more than the crushing, by His avenging might, those who continue to hate Him. Surely, if this were the kind of conquest He was seeking He need not have died to make it possible. Nay, the subjection here spoken of is of men's hearts by grace, not a crushing by might. After having accomplished the work of redemption for men He sat down, expecting—that is, from His seat at the right hand of God He continues to expect—until His expectation shall be realized in His enemies being made the footstool of His feet—until the Gospel has completed its work and had its full triumph.

As an example of attempts to harmonize this passage with pre-millennial views, we quote from Faussett, "Commentary," *in loco*: "He is now sitting at rest, v. 12, invisibly reigning and having his foes virtually, by virtue of his death, subject to him. His present sitting on the unseen throne is a necessary preliminary to his coming forth to subject his foes openly. He shall then come forth to a visible manifested Kingdom and conquest of his foes," etc. Is it necessary to say that the subjection He sat expecting was not one He virtually had. To expect what we already have is a misuse of language. He was to sit until the "virtual subjection," whatever that may mean, became actual. While we must not press too far the figurative expressions, "sat down at the right hand

of God," "the footstool of his feet," the passage cannot mean less than that His enemies are subjected under Him, while exercising the sway, which He assumed when He ascended to the Father. The full results of the atoning work He accomplished, when He offered one sacrifice for sins forever, are finished before He leaves the seat "on the right hand of God." When He leaves that seat, it will not be to save, but to judge men, and give eternal rewards to His people and punishment to His enemies.

If more evidence to the same effect is needed, we refer the reader to Acts 2:34-36, and all the passages to prove that there is no probation or salvation after Christ comes, as given in chap. 4, where the same teaching, in the most explicit form, is found.

In opposition to all this, and in support of their gloomy view, Pre-millennialists rely chiefly upon two passages.

The first is Matt. 24: 14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all nations, and then shall the end come." If the "end" here spoken of is the end of the world, at our Lord's second coming, then, during all the ages in which myriads had never heard the Gospel, it was impossible to believe this end or second advent might surprise the world at any moment. The event could not happen before its necessary condition was fulfilled.

To reconcile this passage with the belief in the perpetual imminence of our Lord's coming, some Pre-millennialists regard the "end" referred to as the

end of the "travail" spoken of in v. 8, and which culminated at the destruction of Jerusalem. (See Meyer, Alford, etc.) In that case this passage has no necessary bearing on the general purpose of the Gospel in all the subsequent ages.

But if this verse does refer to the general purpose of the Gospel in all ages, it can support the view that few will be saved through its proclamation, only as preaching for a testimony is for some other purpose than to save men. This is what Pre-millennialists believe. The chief purpose of this preaching is held to be to make it possible for God justly to condemn men, rather than to save them. It is, therefore, inferred that condemnation and not salvation will be the chief end served by the Gospel up to the end, when Christ comes again.

But is this the true explanation of the expression, "preaching for a testimony"? Cremer, than whom there is scarcely a higher authority, after a comparison of all the places where "for a testimony" occurs, concludes that the preaching for a witness signifies the proclamation of the New Testament facts to men "that they may thus hear of Christ the Messiah." Even Dr. Pierson ("The Coming of the Lord," p. 34), in speaking of the witnessing of the Church, says: "This witnessing includes everything that tends to put before human souls the grandeur, dignity and power of Christ as Saviour and Lord." It is not for a testimony against any, except as they reject Christ about whom the testimony is given. There is nothing in the expression itself to determine

whether the testimony thus given by the Gospel is for condemnation or salvation. It covers the immediate object of the preaching of the Gospel—to make known, or to testify to, if you will—the facts and truths about Christ. It is a making known of Christ in His true relation to human salvation. Whether this will result in condemnation or salvation is not declared. It leaves room for either the salvation or the condemnation of the great bulk of mankind.

At the same time, the view which would make the great purpose of the preaching of the Gospel to be as a witness against men to assure their righteous condemnation, is inconsistent with the very meaning of the word "gospel"—"glad tidings"—and with such passages as John 3 : 17 : "For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him." His coming and the preaching of the Gospel, like all things else which are provided in mercy, if rejected, results in deeper condemnation; but the Gospel is sent forth with a view to salvation. The condemnation comes through the refusal of men to yield to God's manifest intent.

The other passage relied on by Pre-millennialists in support of their pessimistic views of the object of the preaching of the Gospel in the present dispensation, is Acts 15 : 14 : "Brethren, hearken unto me : Symeon hath rehearsed how first God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."

Very large use is made of this verse. In tracts and from pulpits we often see and hear it said, "God did visit the Gentiles, not to save them all, but to take

out of them an elect few, to be a people for his name." This verse is thought an all-sufficient proof of their gloomy views of the future work of the Church. It does not require much thought to perceive how little this verse avails to this end.

James is referring to the specified instance which Peter had rehearsed—the conversion of Cornelius and his household (see vs. 7-9 and compare Acts 10: 44). It is more than probable that James, when he said, "God did first visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name," referred only to the Gentile converts already gathered into the churches. These already constituted a people for God's name.

But if the general purpose in the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles is here declared, it is in nowise in conflict with the belief that a long period is yet to come, in which the great mass of the Gentiles shall be converted. The expression must refer, in this case, to the purpose and result of the preaching of the Gospel throughout the ages to the end. For ages past but comparatively few of the Gentiles have been saved. We do not know how long this shall continue to be true. Even though the great body of the Gentiles continue to be converted for a thousand years before the end, still, of all the innumerable myriads who shall have lived during the Christian era, those of them who are saved would be a people taken out of this vast mass. The expression, "To take out of the Gentiles a people for his name," does not necessarily imply that those "taken out" are but a small proportion of the whole number. So long as all do not

become the people of the Lord, it is hard to see how any other form of language could be used. If nine-tenths or ninety-nine one-hundredths were to be chosen by God, it would still be taking them out from the whole number of the Gentiles. But the evident meaning of the whole passage (Acts 15:14-19) makes plain, not only that it gives no aid to the pessimistic view of our pre-millennial brethren as to the outcome of the gospel dispensation, but that it is all aglow with the most radiant promise. In vs. 16, 17 James proceeds to show that this "taking out of the Gentiles a people for his name" is in harmony with Old Testament prophecy, and quotes Amos 9:11, 12, in a free way from the Septuagint, in proof, where "all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called" are spoken of as seeking the Lord. Now, if the statement of James in v. 14—"taking out of the Gentiles a people for his name"—included only the gathering out from the Gentiles a very few converts in the time preceding the second advent, while the prophecy refers exclusively to the gathering in of *all* the Gentiles after that grand event, as pre-millennial controversialists declare, then the prophecy does not even include the first reception of the Gentiles into the blessings of the gospel dispensation; it is not pertinent to the matter before the Council, and the apostle seems guilty of a misapplication of prophecy. It is only as the prophecy includes the very gathering "out of the Gentiles a people for his name," of which James speaks, that there can be the agreement between them which would justify the reference to the pro-

phcey in support of what had been done, or what it was proposed to do. It would be strange consistency, also, for James to quote in support of a statement that only a few Gentiles were to be saved in the Christian dispensation, a prophecy which declares the salvation of them all. Notice, also, the similarity of James's language, "a people for his name," and that of the prophecy, "the Gentiles upon whom my name is called."

For this reason, all commentators we have been able to consult on this passage,* including Meyer, Wordsworth, Canon Cook, Plumptre, Lechler in Lange, Schaff, A. R. Faussett, Olshausen, Cambridge Bible, Abbott, Howson & Spence, Hackett, and Alford, interpret the prophecy quoted as referring to the reception of the Gentiles to the Gospel, and their subsequent salvation and gathering into Christ's spiritual kingdom in the present dispensation. As Meyer says: "The prophecy has found its Messianic historical fulfilment in the reception of the Gentiles unto Christianity, after that thereby the Davidic dominion, in the higher and antitypical sense of the Son of David, was re-established." Bishop Wordsworth explains, Amos declares in these words, "that the true restoration of the tabernacle of David is to be found in the reception of the residue of the human family, and in the flowing in of all nations, into the Church of Christ." They all associate this prophecy with our Lord's first coming, and make the building again of the tabernacle of David refer to what was to follow this

* "Commentary," *in loco*.

coming of David's greater Son. James seems to think this prophecy covered all the divine purpose of this first coming in reference to the salvation of the Gentiles. He sees the beginning of the realization of that purpose in the gathering in of the Gentiles, which had already taken place. He saw, in this prophecy, the assurance it was still to go on, in the same dispensation, until "the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called." Can this mean anything else than that the conversion of the Gentiles, which had already taken place, was to go on until all the Gentiles who were to be saved should be saved?*

A reference to Rom. 11 : 25 supports this interpretation, if it needs any support. "Hardness in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Pre-millennialists refer the fulfilment of this prophecy to the time preceding the second coming. They are therefore required, in order to harmonize this statement with their view that but few

* Since writing the above my attention has been called to the views of Dr. Stiffler. He thinks James's address was to soothe the Pharisees, not to support Peter in silencing them. "James proposed to show that all scripture which the Pharisees might cite in favor of Jewish superiority and supremacy was relevant, but not relevant at this time, nor relevant in the state of things which God's spirit had now surely brought about, putting Jew and Gentile on the same level." The Old Testament, according to Dr. Stiffler, makes no reference to the church period, and the passage James quotes must refer to the millennial era after the church period has been brought to a close by the coming of the Lord. Dr. Stiffler's attempt to reconcile James's address and quotation with the pre-millennial view is ingenious; at the same time, I have no doubt, James's hearers thought Amos 9: 11, 12, relevant at that time and under the circumstances then existing. His view and argument, also, are based upon the belief that the Christian dispensation was a hiatus in Old Testament prophecy, which is hard to believe.

Comparatively are to be saved before Christ comes again, to make it appear that "fulness" here does not mean the great body of Gentiles, but the full appointed number of the Gentiles. But allow that this is the meaning of "fulness" here, does it even then leave their interpretation free from insuperable difficulty? To say that it signifies the full appointed number who are to be saved before "all Israel shall be saved," would be to make Paul here state a meaningless truism. He would just declare that all the Gentiles who were to be saved before all Israel shall be saved, should be saved before all Israel shall be saved, which it did not require an inspired man to declare, and which a man of the most ordinary wisdom would not take the trouble to say. If "fulness" here does not mean the great body of the Gentiles, it must mean the full number of the Gentiles who are ever to be saved. But this is just what our pre-millennial friends deny; for they hold that the prophecy is to be fulfilled before the second advent, whereas the great bulk of the Gentiles are not to be saved until after that event. If "fulness" here means the full appointed number, and only covers an elect few, then an elect few are all that will ever be saved, and this brings the passage into direct conflict with James's interpretation of Amos in Acts 15: 16-18. The only tenable interpretation of "fulness" in Rom. 11: 25 is to give it its usual meaning of the great body of the Gentiles. And who can doubt that Acts 15: 16-18 and Rom. 11: 25 refer to the same gathering in of the Gentiles? The first says, "All the Gentiles upon whom my name is

called," the last, "the fulness of the Gentiles." Can we believe the first refers to the salvation of the great body of the Gentiles, and the last to the salvation of only an elect few? Can we believe what is declared in these two similar forms of expression, which appear to be essentially identical, can really refer to what is in the strongest contrast, the one alluding to a scattered few in the present dispensation, and the other to the great hosts of the Gentiles in a dispensation which is described as its antithesis? The only consistent interpretation of the two passages is to make them both allude to the same gathering of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God in the present dispensation, before Christ comes. To rend them apart, and make one refer to the salvation of an elect few before the Lord's personal coming, and the other to the conversion of all after His coming, is both to do the greatest violence to the meaning of "fulness" in the connection in which it stands in Rom. 11: 25 (comp. 10-12, and observe "in part" and "fulness," v. 25, and "all," v. 26) and to put asunder passages which evidently refer to the same great but gradual event.

Let, then, the great commission, in which, if anywhere, we might well look for the statement of the purpose of the preaching of the Gospel; let these other passages which have been quoted, and let the proof that there is no probation after Christ comes, be set over against these two misused passages upon which Pre-millennialists depend almost exclusively for their gloomy view. When it is seen that, in the case of one of these passages, it can serve this view only when

interpreted in most obvious disregard of the connection in which it stands, and in case of the other, only by forcing on it a meaning it does not naturally bear, and which it need not convey, may we not well wonder that they could have been used to override the teaching of the very passages which seem expressly given to tell us what the purpose and outcome of the preaching of the Gospel is to be, and which declare it, in no ambiguous terms, to be the very opposite of that which thus seems to be forced from Matt. 24: 14 and Acts 15: 14?

In support of their view that comparatively few are to be saved before the second advent, and that, therefore, the millennium of the righteous cannot have place until after this event, Pre-millennialists refer to a few other passages which, they allege, describe the future of the Church and of the world in too gloomy terms to include such a period.

Emphasis is laid upon 2 Tim. 3: 1 *sq.*, 2 Pet. 3: 3, and two or three kindred passages, in which it is said that in "the last day" there shall be grievous times and a widespread declension from Christian truth and life. But we must not be too sure that all these passages refer to the times immediately preceding the second coming of the Lord. In Acts 2: 17 "last days" is used to cover the whole dispensation. In 1 Tim. 4: 1 "later times" also refers to all the times subsequent to those in which the apostle lived. It is also to be remarked that he refers to similar conditions, as in 2 Tim. 3: 2 *sq.*, and Paul warns Timothy of them, in both letters, in order to prepare him for them as

already begun or immediately impending. In James 5: 3 also "the last days" are used to designate the times when James wrote his letter. While "the last day" has a single definite reference to the coming of the Lord and the grand events associated with it, the expression "the last days" does not have so fixed a reference to the times immediately preceding this closing act of this age. It is also noticeable that John (1 John 2: 18) declares the time when he wrote, the "last time." Now, if the scripture writers used these expressions to cover the whole period of the Christian dispensation, including the time when they themselves lived, as they do in some instances, it is difficult to prove that they used them in any case exclusively of the time immediately before the end of the world. "Last days" would, according to this interpretation, be in tacit antithesis to the days of the past, The meaning of 2 Tim. 3: 1 *sq.*, would then be that Paul saw all he described as to take place in the future, but not necessarily, perhaps not probably, in the remote future: for how, then, could he refer to what was to happen to forewarn Timothy as against what already threatened the early church? But even though Paul and Peter did refer to what was immediately to precede the end, their descriptions would be just in keeping with the great lapse of righteousness and the uprising of wickedness between the millennium and the end, as described in Rev. 20: 6-11. Neither does either of the apostles declare that the conditions of things they describe in the passages we have referred to, abide as a permanent feature of

the life of this dispensation. If the view be taken that the apostles referred in them to the times immediately preceding the end, as it is in these *last days* that these departures from the faith and life of the Gospel were to occur, it certainly implies that it was in them only that they should be manifested; or manifested, at least, to the degree they were then to reach. If they refer to the whole period of the Church, beginning with the apostolic age, then it is merely declared that such a state of things would have place: but for how long or how often, nothing is said. In neither case, therefore, can these passages have any decisive bearing upon the question at issue. If, finally, we take the view that the writers of these passages really expected the Lord soon to appear, and thought the times in which they lived the last in the sense of immediately preceding His advent, then the foreshortening of the future which reduced thousands of years to a span, left room, in the stretches of time it proved they left unnoticed, for a millennium of prevalent righteousness. These passages do not prove that the world will grow worse and worse until the second advent. They only prove that there will be a period of relapse.

Reference is also made to such passages as 2 Tim. 3: 12, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"; John 16: 33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." But in the latter passage, our Lord refers specifically to His disciples to whom He was speaking, as the connection shows. In the first the meaning need be nothing more than that all

of those who would live godly, in the times and circumstances prevailing when Paul wrote to Timothy, shall suffer persecution, not that the persecuting might of evil should prevail without break to the end of the world.

It is held that Matt. 24 : 37, 38 (comp. Luke 17 : 26, 27) indicates that the time immediately preceding the coming of the Lord will be one of abounding wickedness. But the comparison is not so much between the wickedness of the days before the flood and those days, as between the unexpectedness of the coming of the flood and of our Lord. Just as in the parable of the ten virgins, the cry, "Behold the bridegroom cometh," caught the virgins all slumbering, and took them by surprise, so here, the coming of the Son of God bursts upon a world as little expecting His appearing as did the antediluvians the flood. If emphasis is to be laid upon the wickedness as well, it is also laid upon the destruction of the wicked as well, and this is just what our pre-millennial brethren deny: for they hold that Christ does not come to destroy "all" the wicked, but to introduce the great era of salvation. If it is here declared that wickedness is to abound, and that the wicked are to be destroyed at the Lord's coming, it is in exact accord with the post-millennial interpretation of Rev. 20 : 11 *sq.*, where the final uprising of wickedness after the millennium is crushed out by the coming of the Lord and the tremendous scenes of the general resurrection and judgment.

The pre-millennial interpretation of Luke 18 : 8

"Howbeit, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" as declaring that our Lord really doubted whether there should be any believers or saved people on the earth at His second coming, proves too much, and contradicts the plainest teaching of other passages. In our Lord's parables referring to His coming, He speaks of the faithful servants, and in most cases they outnumber the unfaithful. There is wheat as well as tares at His coming, and the tares are among the wheat, suggesting that the great mass of mankind are saved. Pre-millennialists themselves make the judgment of Matt. 25: 31 *sq.*, that of the nations which are alive on the earth when our Lord comes, and yet some of these are described as sheep, and enter into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Their own interpretation of these parables is in conflict with the one they give of Luke 18: 8, showing that it is as impossible from their own view as from the plainest teaching of the whole New Testament. Paul speaks of those who are alive when Christ comes, who are to be caught up to meet Him in the air, and the living righteous shall not precede the righteous dead in the glad resurrection day, in meeting the Lord, in their resurrection bodies. Whatever interpretation we accept of this passage, it cannot mean what our pre-millennial friends would make it signify.

Perhaps the passage upon which they chiefly rely to prove that the world is to get worse and worse until our Lord comes, is 2 Thess. 2: 3-10, "Let no man beguile you in any wise, for it will not be, except

the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things ? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work : only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming."

Our purpose does not require a discussion of the difficulties which beset the interpretation of this passage. Suffice it to say that a few of the best exegetes, and not all of them Post-millennialists, do not regard the "manifestation of his coming" or presence which is to "slay" and "bring to nought" the "lawless one" or "the man of sin," as His personal appearing. But allow that it is of our Lord's personal appearing that the apostle speaks, and still we are not required to believe that evil is to go on with steady and ever-increasing might until the second advent. The apostle is giving the future history of iniquity, and not a general history of the Church and of the world. It is the long-drawn course of evil which presents itself in his vision, and suffices to make the immediate coming of the Lord impossible. His course of thought, therefore, does not require the mention of any long period

of prevalent righteousness during the time iniquity is to continue to exist on the earth, even though He was aware that such a period was to have place before evil was to be brought to nought "by the manifestation of his coming." In an outline of the whole course of evil, extending over two thousand and we know not how many more thousands of years, which is contained in two or three graphic sentences, there is no room for the specification of details. Even though Paul did not have his mind fixed upon the dark history of iniquity, the sweep of the description is far too general to make it anything like certain that he must have mentioned the millennial period, were it within the limits of the time his outline covers. There is also mention made of a restraining power which keeps the working of lawlessness secret, "a mystery," in contrast to the revelation of the "lawless one," near the end. During the time of this restraint of evil, in connection with the general nature of the description, there is room for a millennium consistent with the great uprising of wickedness (Rev. 20: 7-11) at its close.

Nor is this all. There is a positive and fatal objection to the view that the millennium is to come after the coming of the Lord here spoken of. If the millennium is to come after this great event, so also must the tremendous uprising of wickedness which succeeds it in Rev. 20: 7-11. But if anything be plain, Paul in our passage intends to trace the dark history of evil in this world until its complete and final overthrow. The interpretation, which places the

millennium after this close of the history of evil is impossible: because we have, after the millennium, and long after the end of its course mentioned here, an outburst described in terms which make it evident that it is to be one of the most terrific that the earth, which has been so long cursed with so many of them, is ever to see. Just as surely as Paul in 2 Thess. 2:3-10 traces the history of iniquity to its close, so certain is it that the coming of the Lord, which is to mark its final destruction, must be after the great uprising of wickedness in Rev. 20:7-10, and, therefore, after the millennium. Instead, therefore, of this passage affording an insuperable objection to the post-millennial view it is to the pre-millennial view it is fatal.

Neither can this passage be made to square with other features of the pre-millennial theory. Evil, in its great representative, is not to be slain and "brought to nought" by the "manifestation of his coming," meaning His second personal advent, according to this theory. Iniquity, through the conversion of a world almost altogether given up to wickedness at His coming, is to be destroyed by a process of conversion after He has come, and the seeds of evil are to remain for over a thousand years, to spring up at last for a terrible harvest.

Finally, how are 2 Thess. 2:3-10 and Rev. 20:7-10 to be reconciled?

No one who compares the two passages carefully, can fail to be struck by the similarity of their descriptions. The outburst of evil in both covers but a short period. In Thessalonians it seems to have its cul-

mination, its time of power and its overthrow within the lifetime of some prince of evil: in Revelation it is said to be "for a little time." In each case the bursting forth of the evil might appears to be sudden. In both cases it flares forth after long restraint, apparently the more fierce because of the long repression. In both sudden destruction falls upon the evil power, when at its terrific climax. In both the overthrow of evil seems to be utter and final, from which there is no recovery. If they both describe the final overthrow, they must, of course, be different descriptions of the same event. In one the destruction is said to be by "the manifestation of his coming." In the other it is said, "fire came down out of heaven and devoured them" (Rev. 20: 9). When we read in 2 Thess. 1: 7, 8 of the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven—in flaming fire, "rendering vengeance," we see how the "fire out of heaven" of Rev. 20: 9 might well be the "flaming fire" of the Lord's coming of 2 Thess. 1: 7, 8.

This interpretation would associate the "fire out of heaven" with the coming of the Lord to raise the dead, and to judge all men "out of the things written in the books" as the author immediately proceeds to describe. While there are some points left without full explanation, this interpretation brings the passage in 2 Thess. 2: 3-10, into strictest harmony with Rev 20: 4-15, and is in agreement with the general teaching of the New Testament that there is no probation after Christ comes.

All the millennium there is, therefore, must be

before the coming here spoken of, for there can be no uprising of wickedness after the destruction of evil here alluded to, and after probation ends and judgment has been executed.

A general study, therefore, of 2 Thess 2 : 3-10 does not forbid a millennium consistent with the continued existence of evil during its course, which the uprising of wickedness at its close makes necessary. The character of the destruction dealt with also as it culminates in the "man of sin" and the seeming essential identity of the latter part of this description with Rev. 20 : 7-10 makes a millennium and a subsequent uprising of wickedness after the "manifestation of his coming" here spoken of, out of the question. So also does all the proof already given that probation ends at the coming of the Lord. We have positive evidence, however, that there is to be a growth in Christ's kingdom on earth until the world is brought to His feet, instead of the world growing worse and worse until the end.

In Matt., chap. 13, there are two parables, evidently intended by our Lord to describe the future of the kingdom of heaven among men. In vs. 31, 32 He sa'y's: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field, which is indeed less than all seeds: but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heavens come and lodge in the branches thereof."

The feature of the kingdom of heaven here spoken of is evident upon the face of the passage. It is to

increase from a very small beginning until it becomes great. The mustard plant, however large it grows, is of the same nature as the seed from which it springs. There is no hint in this parable of a people back-sliding into evil. It is the kingdom of heaven still, the same in character but grown into greatness. To speak of unclean birds lodging in the branches of the mustard tree, and say that the parable refers to a corrupt church, is to be ruled by fancy, rather than deal in sober exegesis. The kingdom of heaven is not said to be like the birds, be they clean or unclean, but like the mustard tree which must, by virtue of its being a mustard tree, be of the same nature as the seed. It is not said whether the birds are clean or unclean. All that is signified by the birds taking refuge in the branches, if it is added for any other purpose than to show the size of the mustard tree, is to show that the kingdom of heaven is to be a shelter for those who might naturally be expected to take refuge there, just as the birds naturally find shelter in the branches of trees.

According to this parable then, the kingdom of heaven, in comparison with its small beginning, is to become great and mighty.

May we not also believe it was intended to teach that this kingdom was also to reach the fulness of its greatness and strength, not by sudden impulses of power, but by a growth, in the main steady? There is room for the arrest of growth, it may be, as a plant is stricken by drought, etc. There is room for more or less rapid growth. There may be room for tem-

porary decline, just as a plant may become weak through evil conditions. But there is no room in this parable, any more than there is in the facts of the church history, for the view that this kingdom is to have no growth which will impress the world and make it better. There is no room for the idea that the kingdom is not yet established, or that it is to have no growth until a time in the indefinite future, when our Lord is to come; and that then it is to shoot up into fullest growth, and bloom like a century plant in a day. Its increase from the beginning until it reaches its fullest growth, is to be on the same principles, so far as this parable gives us any information. It is not to begin and end its development under such changed principles as those our pre-millennial brethren suppose will prevail before and after our Lord's second coming.

The second parable follows in v. 33, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened."

The natural interpretation of this parable is evident. There does not seem to be anything dark or hidden about it. It is to the leaven the kingdom of heaven is like, and it is like it in its pervasive, assimilative power. That which corresponds to the three measures of meal is mankind, among whom the kingdom of heaven is introduced. Corresponding to the woman would be God himself, who established this kingdom among men. The teaching is that, just as the leaven does not cease its pervasive, assimilative

influence until all into which it is cast is transformed and made like itself, so also the kingdom of heaven, as it has been introduced among men, is not to cease its work until all mankind, in the general sense in which such comprehensive representations are to be taken, has been reached and transformed by its principles. Like the leaven, it is to begin its work as soon as it is placed in contact with the life of the world. Like the leaven, it is not to cease its work until "all" the great mass of mankind has yielded to its transforming power. The final generality of its assimilative influence is one of the plainest teachings of the parable, just as in the preceding parable it is a progress from the beginning of the kingdom on earth until its close. Fluctuations there may be, but there is a general advance, just as the tide flows on, although there may be receding waves upon the beach during its flood. Instead of evil going on to a great climax, from the time the kingdom was set up by our Lord until He comes again, it is the principles of His kingdom which sweep onward, as the ages go by. From the time when our Lord said "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," instead of evil being on the flow and the principles of this kingdom on the ebb, it was to be the forces of evil which were to ebb and the forces of His kingdom which were to move forward in perpetual flood. The great trend of the ages was to be upward and not downward.

So evident is the teaching of this parable, interpreted in this natural way, fatal to the pessimistic view of our pre-millennial brethren, that they are

aware its force must be broken or their theory abandoned.

The attempt to interpret this parable in harmony with their view that the world is growing worse, is one of the most astounding of exegetical performances. They actually attempt to show that leaven is used here as a symbol of pollution and corruption, as in most other cases in the Bible, and that the parable is to show "the progress of corruption and deterioration in the outward visible church," as Alford states the view to controvert it. Let us see how the parable reads, when the language of reality is substituted for that of symbol, on this understanding. "The kingdom of heaven is like pollution and corruption which Satan introduced into the outward visible church until the whole was corrupted." Now, the comparison is either between the kingdom of heaven and the leaven, or it is between the progress of the kingdom and the leaven in its transforming work. If we take the first alternative, then the kingdom of heaven is pollution and corruption, which no one will dare affirm. If we take the second, then it is the kingdom of heaven which is to transform and assimilate humanity as the leaven does the meal. That which transforms and assimilates in each case must transform through what it is in itself, and assimilate to its own nature. If we say that something transforms by what is foreign to its own nature, and assimilates to what is the very opposite to itself in nature, we are perverting expressions to a false use. If the kingdom of heaven is to act like leaven in the meal, just as the leaven is said

to transform by its own nature to its own nature, so the kingdom must do its work by its own principles bringing the world into harmony with themselves. If the kingdom of heaven, in acting like leaven, pollutes, it must be because its principles, which it infuses, are themselves morally corrupt. This, no man, however much driven by the need of bad exegesis to support a questionable theory, would venture to assert. From whatever standpoint, therefore, we view the parable, this pre-millennial interpretation is impossible.

Neither is it true that leaven is always a symbol of evil in the Bible. In Lev. 7:13, 23:15-17 leavened bread is commanded to be offered to the Lord. Rev. J. Gall, in his excellent treatise on "Wherein Millenarians are Wrong," argues that when the work of Christ is symbolized, as it was definite and fixed, leaven was forbidden; but where the expansive work of the Spirit was to be set forth, leaven is commanded, as in the instances given above. His argument is strong. But be this as it may, we can scarcely believe that God would command, even in symbol, that what is essentially evil and corrupt should be offered to Him. We are more than doubtful whether leaven is invariably the symbol of evil in the Scriptures.

The pre-millennial interpretation of this parable, even if it were possible on other grounds, is impossible because it proves too much, especially for other features of their own theory. If the kingdom of heaven is to help the spread of corruption until "all "

is corrupted, we fail to see why our loving Father in heaven established it on earth. Why be at such tremendous cost to hasten evil on to its universal dominion? For, mark you, this parable gives the final outcome of the existence of the kingdom on earth. Also, if this is to be the future of the work of the kingdom, what becomes of the teaching that the kingdom is not yet established, and that, when it is inaugurated at Christ's second coming, instead of its being associated with a victorious might of evil, righteousness is to have its grand triumph?

Finally, this interpretation of this parable, and the whole view of the continued progress of evil until Christ comes, in whose interest it is adopted, at so much violence to its plainest meaning, is contradicted by the facts of church history. Is it true that, from the time Christ set up His kingdom—the leaven was put in the meal—the world has been growing worse and worse? The man who would say so must either be ignorant of the festering wickedness of the world at the time of Christ, or he must shut his eyes to the condition of the world to-day.

In addition to these parables which so clearly teach the growth of the kingdom of heaven and the extension of its principles in their pervasive and transforming might, the reader is referred to all the passages adduced in proof that "all the Gentiles," "the fulness of the Gentiles," and "all Israel" are to be saved in the present dispensation; and also the proof that there is to be no salvation for any after our Lord's second coming. If this last position has been

sustained, then every glowing description of the progress of truth and righteousness and the gathering of the people of the world into the kingdom of God might be adduced in rebuttal of the interpretation which would draw from the Bible the dark doctrine that it is evil and not good which is advancing with all-conquering might in the present dispensation. We place all this over against the few passages adduced to establish this deplorable position. To conclude: some of the passages depended upon can only help this view as a very forced and unnatural interpretation is given them, an interpretation to which no first-class exegete has ever committed himself. Others are general in their character, and do not necessarily conflict with the alternative view. This interpretation is also in direct conflict with the facts of history, and cannot be reconciled even with other features of the pre-millennial view. Does it seem presumptuous to declare that it is erroneous?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MILLENNIUM.

OUR treatment would not be complete without a short chapter on the millennium itself.

According to Rev. 20: 1-6, Satan is said to be bound for a thousand years, and restrained for this long period from deceiving the nations. The souls of the martyrs are said to live and reign with Christ. If our interpretation of this passage be correct, this is the language of symbol, as is so much of Revelation, indicating the triumph of the cause and spirit of the martyrs, just as the binding of Satan signifies negatively the limiting and controlling of his evil power. Just how much is meant by this symbolic description is not easy to determine. No true view of the period, however, can be had, unless we make it consistent with the uprising of wickedness which is immediately to follow, as described in Rev. 20: 7-10: "And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are on the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city : and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them."

It is to be noticed that this dark period is declared to be "a little time" in v. 3. While we must not press this comparative designation of its length too far, and make it too short, the whole description makes it evident that evil flares out with great suddenness. It is scarcely consistent with the view that it arises gradually, as the last generation of the millennium die, and a new generation gradually give themselves up to the deceptive blandishments of Satan. Immediately upon his release he is said to go forth to deceive the nations, and to gather his followers to battle. He does not need to wait until a new generation grows up who have not beheld the glory of the millennial years. He does not have to delay until a host "as the sand of the sea" are born and grow up in sin. He seems to find his material ready to his hand. What is the necessary inference from all this, for all who believe that regeneration is once and for all, and that all who are regenerated are beyond such deceptive power as Satan is here said to use, and cannot be supposed to make up the army he gathers? It must be that during the millennium—at the close of a period so transcendently blessed—there are to be hosts of unregenerate men and women who will be ready, when the power of evil again is on the flood, to give themselves up to its flow, and to ally themselves with the satanic might which is gather-

ing its forces to dash itself against the stronghold of the saints of the Lord. This is in perfect accord with Old Testament prophecy of the millennial period. In Isaiah 65 : 20, for instance, in a prophecy acknowledged by Pre-millennialists universally to refer to this era, we read that the sinner dying an hundred years old, shall be accursed. Does not this give us a pretty certain clue to the character of the millennium, and help us in our interpretation of the glowing imagery of Old Testament prophecy in reference to it? Righteousness is to rule, the might of evil is to be kept in subjection, the principles of the kingdom of heaven are to dominate the social life, and manifest themselves in all the range of human activities; but all men are not saved. Sin is subject, but it is not eradicated. It may be smouldering in the souls of hosts of unregenerate people. It may even be growing intense through its repression, and all the more ready to burst out in sudden and destructive violence when once Satan is permitted to give it the electric touch of his unrestrained power. Those who have noticed the exuberance of description in the prophecies of the return from the captivity in Babylon will have little difficulty in reconciling with the view of the millennium given above, the glowing language used of it in the Old Testament. We are seeking, in what is given above, to give the true view of the millennium, and are not assuming that Pre-millennialists generally have a different conception of it, so far as the existence of sin is concerned.

Let us gather up a few of the difficulties which

beset the pre-millennial view of the millennium, as following the coming of the Lord.

Pre-millennialists all believe that the present dispensation is to witness the salvation of but comparatively few. During its course the world is to grow worse and worse, and it is to end in gloom and failure, so far as the salvation and sanctification of men are concerned. In contrast with this, as soon as Christ appears to introduce the millennium and to set up His kingdom and begin His personal reign, with the world at the climax of its wickedness, the work of salvation is to sweep over the earth, a nation is to be born in a day, and righteousness is soon to wield its sceptre over the life of mankind.

The first difficulty is to discover whence our pre-millennial brethren, after the coming of Christ and what occurs at His coming, are to get the wicked stock which shall afford the material for the wondrous displays of saving power which we all believe are to glorify this period. If anything is clear, the "day of the Lord," in 2 Peter 3: 10, is the day of our Lord's second coming (see v. 4). How, then, are the people in the flesh—all the wicked who have not been changed by receiving their resurrection bodies—to survive that day when the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up? To evade this difficulty by putting the final conflagration more than a millennium after our Lord comes, as does Blackstone, etc., is a desperate resort.

But this is not all. These brethren tell us that the

judgment of Matt. 25 : 31 *sq.*, is of "the living nations." We do not admit their right to exclude from "all the nations" (v. 32), any nation, be it Jew or Gentile, any more than to limit the application of the same expression in the great commission. But all the nations would then include all who are in the flesh after our Lord appears. These, according to pre-millennial interpretation, can only be the wicked: for all the living saints have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, after having received their resurrection bodies. How, then, can there be any righteous people among these nations to hear the welcoming "Well done," etc? But allowing that good people still live in the flesh—even allow the figment of a coming for and a coming with His people, with a time between when some of the wicked who alone were left when the righteous were caught up, might be converted—and still the difficulty remains. All the nations, including all mankind, either go away into eternal punishment or eternal life. This judgment is to final destiny, and as it is at the beginning of the millennium, there can be no conversions: for there remain none who are in a state of probation. Even concede that "all the nations" here means, all the Gentile nations, and that the Jews are the "brethren" of the Lord spoken of in this grand description, and still there is no great release from the difficulty. We cannot suppose He would thus designate the Jews who were still opposing Him, and that the eternal destiny of all men on the earth at His coming would be determined by the way they had treated these

still stubborn and unbelieving members of this race. Still we cannot find any men to be saved, after this judgment, even allowing it to be of the living nations.

Not only so, but it is evident from Old Testament descriptions of the millennial era that men in the flesh are to be agents in the great work of God which is then to make such glorious progress. But it is as difficult to find righteous, as wicked, men in the flesh, after Christ comes, and the judgment of Matt. 25:31 *sq.*, takes place, even though it were of the living nations only. They could not, any more than the wicked, survive the burning day of 2 Peter 3:10. *All* the saints, also, are changed when Christ appears to raise the dead (1 Cor. 15:50-52). There can, therefore, be no righteous people, in the flesh, when the millennium begins, to be the great missionaries of which our pre-millennial brethren speak, to the world of unsaved people they conceive then to be awaiting their ministry. If there be wicked men then still in a state of probation, they must be brought in by the agency of the glorified, if by human agency at all.

Thus the pre-millennial view, on this point, is self-contradictory, and is impossible in both of its parts. There are no wicked people still remaining in the flesh after the judgment of Matt. 25:31 *sq.*, to be converted, and there are no saints still in the flesh to be the ministers of their salvation, did they then so exist.

The conception Pre-millennialists have of the con-

ditions existing in the millennium are almost impossible of belief. Its very central thought is that Christ is then to reign in personal and visible presence on the earth. The kingdom is not really to be established until He begins His personal reign. Their literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy forces upon them this view, and they must be prepared to face all the consequences. They, for the most part, glory in it: but some, when confronted with its difficulties, make vague statements. But if our Lord is to reign in visible and personal presence on the earth, so must all the hosts of the saved in all generations, for, according to their interpretation of Rev. 20: 4-6, all these are included in those who are to live and reign with Him, and if He is reigning on the earth, so must all these be with Him here. These innumerable hosts of the glorified saints of all the ages are to associate with mortal men in the flesh. Raised above the needs of the earthly life, they are to mingle with men who are tilling their fields, preparing food and raiment, building houses, etc. They are also to witness pain and death, for people are to continue to die. In this period, too, the virus of evil is still to be in the nature, as is proved by the need of regeneration then, and the multitudes who are ready to follow Satan at its close, and they are to be brought into intimate relations with sin. This view also requires us to believe, either that those who are saved in the millennium receive their resurrection body as soon as they believe, or that there must be another special resurrection for those who die during its continuance.

The former of these alternatives involves with it the necessary conclusion that, then, it is only the unsaved who continue to propagate the race, that the work of evangelization, so far as human agency is concerned, must be done by the glorified, and that the army of Satan, in the great uprising, actually comes up against the camp of glorified and immortal saints, thus overturning all our conceptions of the security of those who have passed into this state. The latter—that saints die during the millennium—if this is the time when believers can be said first to inherit the kingdom of heaven, is in direct conflict with 1 Cor. 15 : 50, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," and of this second special resurrection and judgment of saints there is not the remotest hint in the Bible: nay, the teaching of Scripture is opposed to it from Genesis to Revelation.

Again, how is it possible to reconcile this view of the millennium with the uprising of wickedness at its close? We are asked to believe that, after a thousand years of Christ's visible and personal rule upon the earth with His glorified saints, sin is still unsubdued, and only needs the presence and solicitation of the prince of evil to flame up in God-defying might. We must remember that our Lord's second personal coming is represented in terms of boundless contrast to His first. It is to be "in power and great glory" (Matt. 24 : 30). He is to come "in glory and all the angels with him" (Matt. 25 : 31). The glory is to flash around the world (Matt. 24 : 27). It is to be in "the glory of his might" (2 Thess. 1 : 9).

From His face the very heavens are to flee away (Rev. 20 : 11). Of the Lord who is to come, it is said, His eyes are "a flame of fire," His voice like "the sound of many waters," and His countenance as "the sun shining in his strength" (Rev. 1 : 13-16). This Being, clothed with the glory and might and majesty of divinity, with all the glorified hosts of redeemed men, is to be present on the earth, displaying His power in overcoming grace and judgment for a thousand years, and there are still people as the sands of the sea who, with the knowledge of His victorious sway for a thousand years, and in the very presence of His majesty and the myriads of redeemed men, if not of angels as well, are ready to rise up and try conclusions with Him and His hosts. For, be it noticed, there is no hint given of any withdrawal of our Lord and the redeemed from the earth, if they are on the earth at all. While this reign with Christ goes on, this insurrection is organized. The fact that the forces of Satan are said to be gathered from the four corners of the earth, seems to imply that there were nations far away from the seat of power that were unsubdued, and that these are now allowed to come up against the central power of the saints, where Christ and the saints had been reigning. They come up, then, against the same rule which had been exercising sway during all the previous periods. They come, therefore, according to pre-millennial ideas of this rule, up against Christ in all His personal might and against the glorified hosts who have been reigning so long with Him, as well as against saints in the

flesh. They actually hem these in in the beloved city whither they had betaken themselves, and the camp they had constructed for defence. Mortal men forcing the omnipotent Christ in personal and terrible presence with all the hosts of the redeemed, as well as all mortal saints to betake themselves to defences, in order to keep themselves from being swept away, and fire from heaven has to come down to deliver them !

It is difficult enough to understand how a condition of things which required even a figurative description of this kind, could succeed a thousand years of the dominance of gospel influences which Post-millennialists believe will prevail. But to suppose all this is to be taken literally, and that mortal men will have the awful daring to come up against the omnipotent Son of God, after He had reigned in person with the glorified saints for a thousand years, and that *He* would permit himself to be beleaguered by them, and have to be rescued by the delivering power of God, is more than human credence ought to be asked to believe.

In the millennium both the righteous and the wicked are to continue to die. If this has not already been made clear, let the reader consider Isa. 65 : 20 : "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days : for the child shall die an hundred years old, and the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed." Pre-millennialists recognize this passage as part of a description of the millennial era. Its teaching is perfectly plain. While life will be prolonged, still both the righteous

and the unrighteous are to die. We have, therefore, through the millennium, death making its ravages, even as now. If our Lord comes to introduce the millennium, as our pre-millennial friends hold, death is to still maintain its sway over both classes of men, after our Lord comes. This view presents two difficulties. If all the saints who are to live after those of the generation in which He comes, are to die as all generations before, how comes it that for this one generation, at His appearing, this rule is reversed, and the living righteous are changed, being thus relieved from the necessity of dying? Why should the coming of Christ in person to the earth be attended with this triumph over death, in the resurrection of dead saints and the change of living saints, if immediately there is to be the reversion back again to the old subjection to death? Will the returning Saviour manifest but a flash of resurrection and quickening might, and then, while personally present with His people, hand all the living again over to the power of the last enemy? Why should there be such discrimination in favor of the one generation which happens to be on the earth at His coming, if immediately the succeeding generations are to be handed over again to His dominion? Then the resurrection described in 1 Cor. 15 is not the resurrection in which this last enemy is destroyed; his grip is but loosed for a moment, to be tightened again for a thousand years. The event described there is but a hiatus in the rule of death. Where is there any hint of any such thing in the Bible?

Then it must not be forgotten that our pre-millennial brethren give deliverance from the necessity of dying as the most blessed part of the blessed hope of our Lord's coming—the feature which lifts it immeasurably above the departing and being with Christ. And yet, in what is to be the supreme blessedness of this golden era, with the Lord in majesty reigning on the earth, and in sight of the multitude of risen and changed saints, the righteous who are converted after Christ comes are still to have the king of terrors to face. Why are they left subject to death, now that the Victor over death has once asserted His might? Why is the glory of this halcyon period marred by this dread monster death, as Pre-millennialists are inclined to regard him? Can it be possible that their view of a release from the need of dying as one of the chief elements, if not the chief one, in the blessedness of our Lord's coming, is the true one, if this is not to be realized by those who are saved during all the long period of our Lord's alleged reign on earth?

CHAPTER XV.

SOME EVILS OF PRE-MILLENNIALISM.

TRUTH is very precious. In our quest for it we should spare no pains. All truth is so interdependent that indifference to any part of it may make impossible the fullest understanding of it all. A false view of what may be thought a subordinate truth, may distort a whole system of belief. Considerations like these are sufficient to justify the labor given to the preparation of this treatise. There are, however, as the author believes, more specific and practical reasons as well. There inhere in the pre-millennial system not a few tendencies which are most unfortunate—tendencies which not only affect thought, but also the life of individuals and the general activities of churches in a way that is not good. In this concluding chapter it is proposed to refer to these tendencies as they come to light in the course of this discussion, and give them a separate and fuller consideration. The reader is asked to excuse any repetition which this makes necessary.

Underlying the whole pre-millennial system is the ultra-literal interpretation of the Old Testament

Scriptures, which commits Pre-millennialists to many conclusions in contradiction to what seems to be the plainest teachings of the New. The kingdom of God or of heaven as described in Old Testament prophecy, literally taken, is to be one of material splendor upon the earth. Therefore they hold it is not yet established, in defiance of the teaching of the New Testament. Or, seeing that both our Lord and John the Baptist declare the immediate establishment of the kingdom, in terms too plain to be gainsaid, they assume that their expectation was defeated because the Jews refused to accept our Lord as Messianic King, and the inauguration of the kingdom had to be deferred to His second coming. But this compels them to accept these unspeakable conclusions: Our Lord did not understand Old Testament prophecy respecting His first coming. He was ignorant of the treatment He should receive from the Jews, and it came upon Him as a surprise. His expectation was defeated, and He actually had to change His plan. He at first shared in the false expectation of His followers that He was to mount an earthly throne rather than go to the Cross. Had the Jews received Him, He would not have died and made an atonement for sin. Had the Jews received Him, therefore, salvation would have been without atonement, or an atonement would have been made in some other way.

This same ultra-literal interpretation also forces them to believe, not only in the restoration of the Jews to their own land, but also that they are to con-

stitute the dominant factor in this kingdom, as our Lord from His capital, Jerusalem, sways His sceptre in exceeding majesty over a subject world, although Paul knows of no such distinction for them in the chapters, Rom. 9-11, in which he traces their future history.

Some Pre-millennialists shrink back from other conclusions which just as surely follow from this literal interpretation. Others, more logically consistent, feel they can do nothing else but accept them, while they cling to this system of interpretation. They therefore hold, not only that the Jews are to constitute the chief factor in this future kingdom, but that the Gentiles are to be subject to the Jews. Those who are opposed to the Jews are to be smitten as were the Canaanites of old. The Jewish rites and ceremonies are to be restored, and priests and Levites are again to tread the courts of a temple of transcendent glory, and offer sacrifices and observe the feasts and new moons. While perhaps none would be prepared to believe that this perfected Judaism, with all the world proselytes to the Jews or subject to them, is to be the final condition in the millennium, yet this is the last vision of its glory which prophets see, and they have no right to stop short of the full conclusion to which this ultra-literal interpretation leads. If it is used to support a theory, it must also be accepted, when it leads to conclusions which subvert all our conceptions of the wisdom of the divine plan, by making the climax of the religious pro-

gress of the ages a retrogression to the Judaism with which it well-nigh began.

It is also to be noticed that this scheme of interpretation makes it necessary for its advocates to separate the spheres covered by Old Testament prophecy and New Testament teachings. So evidently do the prophecies of the Old Testament, interpreted in the literal way which alone can give support to the pre-millennial theory, refer to altogether different conditions than those contemplated by New Testament writers, that leading Pre-millennialists can only escape the difficulty by asserting that the Old Testament prophets had no visions of the Church and of the gospel dispensation. From our Lord's first coming, with His life, death and resurrection, until His second coming, there is a hiatus in prophecy, Pre-millennialists themselves being judges. There is no hint of the condition of things the prophets picture, if what they declare is to be taken literally, in the teaching and outlook of the whole New Testament, with the exception of Rev. 20: 1-6, and perhaps an allusion or two in Peter. The thought of New Testament writers was of the continuance of the conditions and agencies then existing in connection with the Church, until the end. Beyond this church condition they saw nothing, expected nothing. Jews and Gentiles were to be equal, and the highest boon for both was to be saved through Christ, as men were being then saved. If, as these brethren admit, Old Testament prophecy, literally taken, was altogether inconsistent with New Testament conditions as declared by its apostles and

inspired men, so that these prophecies must refer to another period, almost in contrast, is it not strange the New Testament writers give no hint of being aware of any such Old Testament prediction, or of anticipating any such period? Now, if the literal is the true interpretation of these prophecies, must not the New Testament writers, especially with their inspired insight, have reached similar conclusions? How comes it, then, that they are silent about it all? Nay, how comes it that Paul, with his heart yearning to comfort his people, in the very chapters, Rom. 9-11, in which he traced their future, does not hint at any such pre-eminence as the literal interpretation of the Old Testament gives to them, but makes their conversion the supreme blessing they are to expect? Why is it that their view of the future of the history of redemption ends with the close of the dispensation in which they lived, and the coming of Christ? We are sure this tendency, fostered by the hyper-literal interpretation, to make Old and New Testament teaching irreconcilable, except upon impossible assumptions, is most unwholesome and unsafe.

This ultra-literal interpretation was once more associated with outbreaks of fanaticism than it is now. It was also once used to secure scriptural justification for persecutions. To it, to-day, we are indebted for several false beliefs which are being pressed with great vigor. It is chiefly responsible for the materialistic annihilation theory in all its forms. Life and death mean just natural and physical, or literal life and death. When this natural death takes

place, consciousness ceases, etc. As all spiritual facts must be expressed in terms of the physical, the extreme form of belief based upon the literal interpretation is a bald materialism. So also of Seventh Day Adventism. The Sabbath must be the same literal day the Jews celebrated. If there is departure from the seventh day, all the curses against Sabbath-breaking found in the Old Testament are upon us. Although Pre-millennialists are not by any means all annihilationists and Sabbatarians, all annihilationists and Sabbatarians are Pre-millennialists, showing that these beliefs are all kindred to each other, in some respects, and share in a common source, which we believe to be the literal interpretation we have been discussing, which makes it more easy for Pre-millennialists to be led away by these and other false doctrines.

Space will not permit us to pursue this part of our discussion further.

The pre-millennial view of the purpose of the preaching of the Gospel adds to the mystery of God's moral government. It is never to do more than gather out from the great hosts of mankind an elect few. As the ages go by, and as long as the gospel dispensation continues, it is wickedness which is to become more and more dominant and triumphant, and not righteousness. Instead of the Gospel having greater and greater power, and a larger and larger proportion of mankind being saved as a result of its proclamation, it is to have an ever-diminishing influence over those to whom it is proclaimed, and the proportion of saved men, in evangelized lands, shall

never be so small as when Christ is to appear to end the present dispensation. The preaching of the Gospel, then, is not to bring the nations to the feet of Jesus, finally, for salvation and sanctification: it is proclaimed for a witness. This is its chief purpose; the gathering out of an elect few is but a subordinate result. But what does the preaching for a witness, as distinct from preaching for salvation, really mean? If its chief purpose is not for salvation, not even for the subduing of wickedness, this must be as a witness against men, to place them under deeper condemnation.

This is the view held by the Pre-millennialists who express themselves on the question of the preaching for a witness. Some would hold it to be to lay a just ground for condemnation. But stated in this form, it implies that the unevangelized are not already under righteous condemnation. It can only be, practically at least, to add to condemnation, if it be not for salvation.

But this is not all. One wing of Pre millennialists, convinced by the overwhelming teaching of the New Testament that there is no salvation for any after Christ comes, declare He is to appear to destroy the wicked. The world is to grow worse and worse and be brought under an ever-deepening condemnation through the preaching of the Gospel, until the end of the age, and then our Lord, when sin is at its carnival and men's guilt and condemnation are the most dread, is to come and blot the wicked out of the world by His consuming judgments. This

view is, at least, self-consistent. It holds that God's dealings through the ages, and at the end, are in harmony.

But most Pre-millennialists hold that at the end of this age, when wickedness is at its worst, and all men have been placed under this deeper condemnation through having heard the Gospel, and when the guilt and opposition to Christ are most strong and direful, just then our Lord is to appear, and by the use of a power which must be greater than that in connection with the Gospel, for it succeeds when men are most hardened, when the Gospel failed when they were less depraved, He is to save all the world. Hitherto, throughout unnumbered ages, those who have rejected the gospel message have perished. Nothing further of power, nothing further of special provision, is vouchsafed them. In this last generation of this age, however, God abandons His course up to this time. Now, to those who have not only refused the gospel call, but to those who are the most hardened against Christ and deep-dyed in sin of all the generations, He comes with some new and inscrutable might, or in some grander exercise of a power He has already used, and breaks down this greater opposition, after, for ages, having refused to break down the lesser, and sweeps them all into His kingdom. Whatever mysteries there are in God's moral government, according to any belief—and who that thinks does not acknowledge them?—this view adds to them indefinitely, and makes them well-nigh insoluble. If this dispensation is never to succeed, if

it is foredoomed to end in gloom and failure, if, especially, in addition to failure it is to cast an ever-widening shadow of deeper condemnation over men, to follow them with its greater curse in the grand and solemn future—why allow this foredoomed failure to bring its greater curse upon men for the eternities during unknown centuries, with their more densely thronging myriads? We can see but two reasons for its introduction: the first is that it was finally, in the progress of the ages, to bring the mass of mankind to Jesus' feet, which Pre-millennialists deny; the second, that men had to be hardened and made worse, and brought under greater condemnation, before they could be saved by the transcendent power to be revealed in a succeeding dispensation. But who would venture to assume this last?

The whole teaching about the world growing worse and the preaching of the Gospel as a witness, meaning a witness against all men, is irresistibly toward a view of God most repugnant to all our conceptions of Him, and utterly inconsistent with the statement that "God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world: but that the world should be saved through him" (John 3: 17).

This pessimistic view of the purpose and outcome of the gospel dispensation removes one of the chief inspirations to all but one form of Christian effort. Here is an authoritative statement of the view, as given by Canon Ryle, and published in the Introduction of the "Pre-millennial Essays" of the great Prophetic Conference of 1879;

"I believe, finally, that it is for the safety, happiness and comfort of all true Christians to expect as little as possible from churches, or governments, under the present dispensation, to hold themselves ready for tremendous conversions and changes of all things established, and to expect their good things only from Christ's Second Advent."

We are "to expect as little as possible from churches." We are to be in despair of any great result from church work, "under the present dispensation." The only hope is in the Second Advent and what it introduces. All the energies of Christians, therefore, should be thrown into the work of hastening His coming. As He is to come "when the gospel has been preached for a witness in all the world," this is the only work which should call forth their best efforts. This is the only work in which they can have the inspiration of assurance of success.

Now, what is the result of such a view as this upon Christian effort? It will stimulate the kind of work which is thought to be meant by "preaching the gospel for a witness." This is interpreted by Pre-millennialists generally to mean, giving men an offer of the Gospel. The supreme consideration will then be to reach all men, as soon as possible, with an offer of the Gospel. This is what Post-millennialists and Pre-millennialists alike believe should be done. But when it comes to the reasons why we are to strive to do this, they part company. Pre-millennialists, to be consistent with this statement of their view by Canon Ryle, do not seek to reach all men with the Gospel,

in order that they may be saved through it. They are "to expect as little as possible from churches," and that which the churches are doing. They are not, then, to expect "to make disciples of all the nations." The Gospel is preached with the great aim of fulfilling the condition of Christ's coming, which is thought to be that all the nations have at least one offer of the Gospel, not that they are generally to be saved through the Gospel.

Now, what will be the natural results of these two conceptions of the aim and outcome of the Gospel upon the methods adopted? Post-millennialists, believing that the purpose of the Gospel is to save men, and that it is to make steady progress until the glad time is reached when men generally shall be in this blessed state, will organize their work, and settle down for the long and conquering campaign of the ages. While they will wish to reach all men with the Gospel, they will also study to occupy the ground as they go on to the ends of the earth, and entrench themselves for the long, hand-to-hand struggle. Expecting triumph through present agencies, they will make the most of them, trusting to God to fill them with His own effectual power.

Pre-millennialists, however, expecting little from the preaching of the Gospel, and placing all their dependence in the coming of the Lord, will rather seek to cover the world than plan to possess and hold it. If the Gospel can but be proclaimed so that all may have the opportunity of hearing it, then Christ will come and do all the rest. The work will be

planned on a more superficial basis. The ability of the missionaries and their equipment for their work will be of small moment. Their chief work is to reach as many as possible with the offer of the Gospel, and almost anyone can help do that. They are not to settle down and grapple with heathenism very seriously; for only comparatively few of them are ever to be saved by the Gospel, and the Lord will see that the elect few will be brought in, in subordination to the great purpose of hastening His coming. Some men of larger calibre will be needed to direct; but, for the most part, inferior men and women, with poor training at that, will do. So, also, the need of organizing the work on the foreign field will be chiefly to continue the preaching of the Gospel for a witness, where it is thought this is necessary. If it is thought, especially, that the rest of the ground which has not had the Gospel as a witness, can be covered without any further organization of the work in the rear, it will naturally not be attempted, as it would divert energies from the work which is supreme.

The natural tendencies of the pre-millennial view, as outlined above, have shaped, very largely, the character of the methods and work of all missions under its auspices. While other mission societies have thought that the strongest and best equipped men were needed to grapple with heathenism on the foreign field, those under pre-millennial control send out men whose mental ability and training are not sufficient to qualify them to be pastors of our churches at home, which make least demands. All too little

attention is also given to the organization of the work on the foreign field. As the Gospel is preached to a larger proportion of mankind, and it is thought that the Lord's coming is drawing nearer, the tendency will be to neglect this more and more. The different policies which are the natural outcome of the two views, lift the issue between them above one of mere academic interest, and make it of very vital importance.

But this pessimistic view of the purpose and outcome of the gospel dispensation, when it is intelligently held, has a tremendous bearing upon the inspirations for Christian work. The soldiers who know they are fighting a losing battle, cannot struggle so manfully as those who know they are gradually pressing back the foe to final and irretrievable defeat. Men who feel the conflict the Church of God is waging with sin, is to accomplish but little, and that sin is to grow stronger and more triumphant during all her long struggle can scarcely have the best heart for the supremest effort. It is true, they may feel that it is the will of their Lord that they should thus fight this losing battle, and this ought to afford the highest inspiration: but how much greater would it be, were they to know that their Lord both wished them to struggle, and also gave them assurance of final triumph!

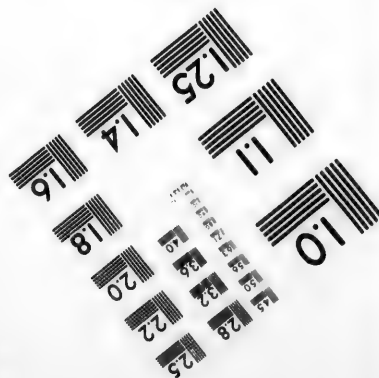
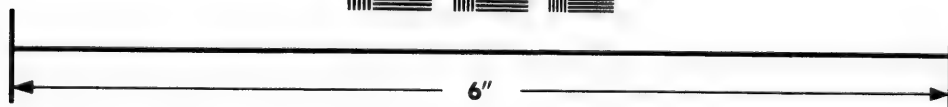
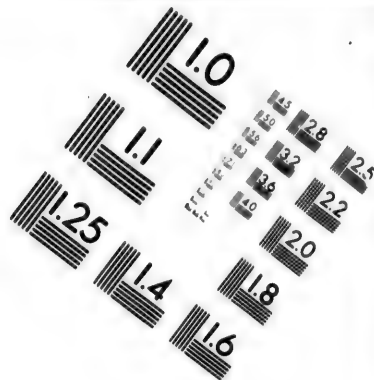
Not supposing God intends to do much through the preaching of the Gospel and its associated agencies in this dispensation, they cannot have faith to ask great things from God; expecting less to be accomplished,

they are more readily satisfied with small results. If wickedness grow greater and more aggressive, even if their work be losing ground, this may be accepted as an evidence of the correctness of their view instead of stimulating to greater endeavor to resist and drive back the tide of evil which is flooding their community or country. Expecting the world to grow worse, they are tempted to make the most of every unfavorable symptom, and the least of what might be fitted to give courage.

On the home field, where all have had an offer of the Gospel, and the preaching for a witness, as they suppose, has been accomplished, the chief work of the Church having been done, the natural result would be to cease the most earnest effort, especially as it might be thought that sufficient had also been done to be God's means for gathering in the elect few. Apart from the sending forth of missionaries, the work of the Church might be thought well-nigh done in the most of the communities in a Christian land like this. Mrs. Guinness, that lady of great mind and heart, saw the natural outcome of her pre-millennial views. In a Conference in England she told the assembled ministers that the Gospel had been preached for a witness already in their favored land. The one thing the Christians of England had to do was to hasten the Lord's coming for the salvation of the nations, by going to the unevangelized portions of the earth to give the people there the offer of the Gospel, and thus complete the condition of His appearing.

While we may be glad that all our pre-millennial brethren are not so logically consistent with their views as was she, this is nevertheless its logical outcome, so far as the writer can see, and it is one which may well convince us that more is involved also in this difference between Pre-millennialists and Post-millennialists than a rather unimportant question of interpretation.

Chief reliance for motive power upon a belief in the perpetual imminence of our Lord's coming which Pre-millennialism encourages, is another unfortunate feature of this view. Reference has already been made to the difficulty of reconciling this doctrine of the perpetual imminence of Christ's coming with the divine veracity. The teaching of the New Testament is thought to be carefully adapted to give to each generation the impression that Christ's coming may be just at hand. This expectation, which our heavenly Father knew was to be a false one for all the generations except the last, He nevertheless inspired the scripture writers to give: so that all generations might have the inspiration of the thought that the Lord might appear at any moment. Now, the motive power of the thought of His coming, on pre-millennial principles, must be in proportion as this transcendent event is thought, really, to be at hand. God has therefore arranged it, that, for all but one generation, men shall be moved to be faithful to Him in proportion as they can cherish an illusive and false expectation. Can such a view be intelligently held, and not encourage the most unworthy thought of



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God? Can a view which seems to reflect so darkly upon the veracity of God be true? Can such a thought of God be encouraged and the robust truth and sincerity of Christian character not be greatly weakened?

If there is any solid ground for the higher motive power of the imminence of His coming, over and above its certainty, it must be because it assures to those who are alive when He appears some transcendent blessing which those who die before this time are not to have. But why should God so discriminate in favor of one generation, without apparent reason? For all others He holds this out as an illusive expectation which will lead to disappointment as keen as the expectation was great. To one generation alone is there to be the fruition of the blessed hope which has but tantalized all the others. Are God's ways thus unequal?

But what can be the special advantage as a motive power of the expectation that Christ may come any day, over the assurance that He is certainly to appear, and that His coming will bring the same blessing whether in the body or out of the body? It is all staked upon His coming before death; for, when once we die, it makes little difference whether He come the next day or a thousand years after the spirit leaves the body. We shall be satisfied in the glory of His presence. Neither can it be held that the saints who have died before His advent shall not share as fully as those who are alive, in all that His appearing is to be and to bring. The one advantage

to those who are alive then, is the deliverance from physical death. Is this so wondrous a salvation as to make it worthy to be exalted as the chief motive power, even though this could only be done by encouraging a delusive expectation, in so many generations? Emphasis is given to this question when we consider all there is in death to alarm the saint who would welcome the personal appearing of the Lord. To him there can be no dread but only joy in the thought of meeting Christ, whether in the body or in spirit. There remains nothing in death, then, for him to dread, but death itself. The rational basis, therefore, of the blessed hope of Christ's coming which is built upon its nearness rather than its certainty, is reduced to the mere deliverance from the pains of dying. But Christians are not such cravens as to make this the great hope which is to give them chief inspiration to faithfulness. Can we suppose the view is scriptural or wholesome which would make God attach such tremendous importance to so small a thing?

Notice, also, that there is a conflict in motives in the pre-millennial view. The motive to Christian work—especially in that of foreign missions—is to hasten the coming of the Lord by fulfilling the condition of preaching the Gospel for a witness in all nations. The motive to this can only be operative as it is thought this condition is not fulfilled, and His coming is not imminent. On the other hand, it is taught only as His coming is thought to be at hand, that there can be the highest motive to general faith-

fulness. If it is believed there are countries in which the Gospel has not yet been preached for a witness, then the necessary condition of His coming is not yet fulfilled, and His coming cannot be thought at hand. If, on the other hand, it is thought His coming may occur before night, it can only be upon the assumption that the Gospel has been preached in all the world for a witness, and this work is ended. If inspiration of the highest kind is received from the one, it is at the expense of the inspiration from the other. No reasonable man can both be quickened to general fidelity by the thought that Christ is immediately to appear, and also be led to strain every energy to offer the Gospel to some unevangelized tribe or nation because this must be done before He can appear. Can our Lord intend us to be moved, at the same moment, by both the motives, that His coming is at hand and is not at hand? There seems no escape from the dilemma. Either hold His coming not to be at hand, and be inspired to faithfulness in the work of hastening His advent, or hold His coming to be at hand, and abandon the motive that the Gospel must be sent to some unevangelized country before He can come. The view which involves this irreconcilable conflict of motives, must be wrong in one or other of its positions, if not in both.

In any case, chief dependence for motive upon what is so vague and uncertain as the time of the Lord's coming, rather than upon its certainty, and upon what it will be equally to all saints, whether in the body or disembodied, cannot but be unwholesome

The motive power must be as uncertain and unsteady as that which is relied upon to furnish it. It encourages the sensuous to the disregard, in some measure, at least, of the spiritual. Christ's coming in material and visible splendor and might is exalted above our going to be with Him in the spiritual fellowship of the spirit state.

Finally, the disproportionate importance given to the pre-millennial view by so many of those holding it, is leading to practical difficulties, and may threaten graver dangers. They feel compelled, because of their conviction of its great consequence, to press it with great vigor, whenever opportunity offers. At the same time, they are very impatient if anything is said in opposition to their special opinion on this subject. To a large proportion of them, the preaching which does not contain it, or which even does not give it chief emphasis, is deemed very unsatisfactory. In churches containing a large element of this class, it naturally happens, if a pastor is to be called, only one who is prepared to lay stress upon this view can receive their hearty support. If one who holds an opposite view is chosen, there is dissatisfaction, and often trouble, if he preaches freely what he and the great majority of the church believe. Many of them will often absent themselves from services of their own churches, to seek elsewhere the preaching which gives emphasis to the view which has so large a place in their esteem. In missionary operations, they are in heartiest sympathy with missions under pre-millennial auspices, and a large part of their

beneficence will be diverted from the work of their own body into these treasuries. In proportion as their special view is magnified, will they be disposed to seek their closest fellowship with those sharing it with them, and the bands binding them to their denomination, through kindred views in other respects, will be weakened. In some cases it is becoming very difficult for those who do not hold pre-millennial views, to work harmoniously with the more extreme Pre-millennialists, in the same church, unless by yielding to them more than they ought to be expected to do. While there are many who do not magnify this view out of all proportion to its comparative importance, and who throw their best energies in all loyalty into the work of the churches and the denominations to which they belong, there are also many of the more extreme Pre-millennialists whose sympathies, contributions and efforts are diverted elsewhere. The various denominations may well regard the drift of many of their members into that form of Pre-millennialism with much concern.

My work is done. If even unconsciously I have wrested any Scripture from its most natural interpretation, or, if I have not maintained the true spirit of Christian gentleness and the humility of one who is seeking after truth rather than to support a theory, I ask pardon of God and also of my brethren. This little treatise, in all its imperfection, is sent forth in the hope that it may be of some service to the cause of truth.

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